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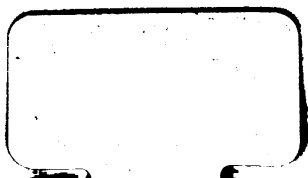
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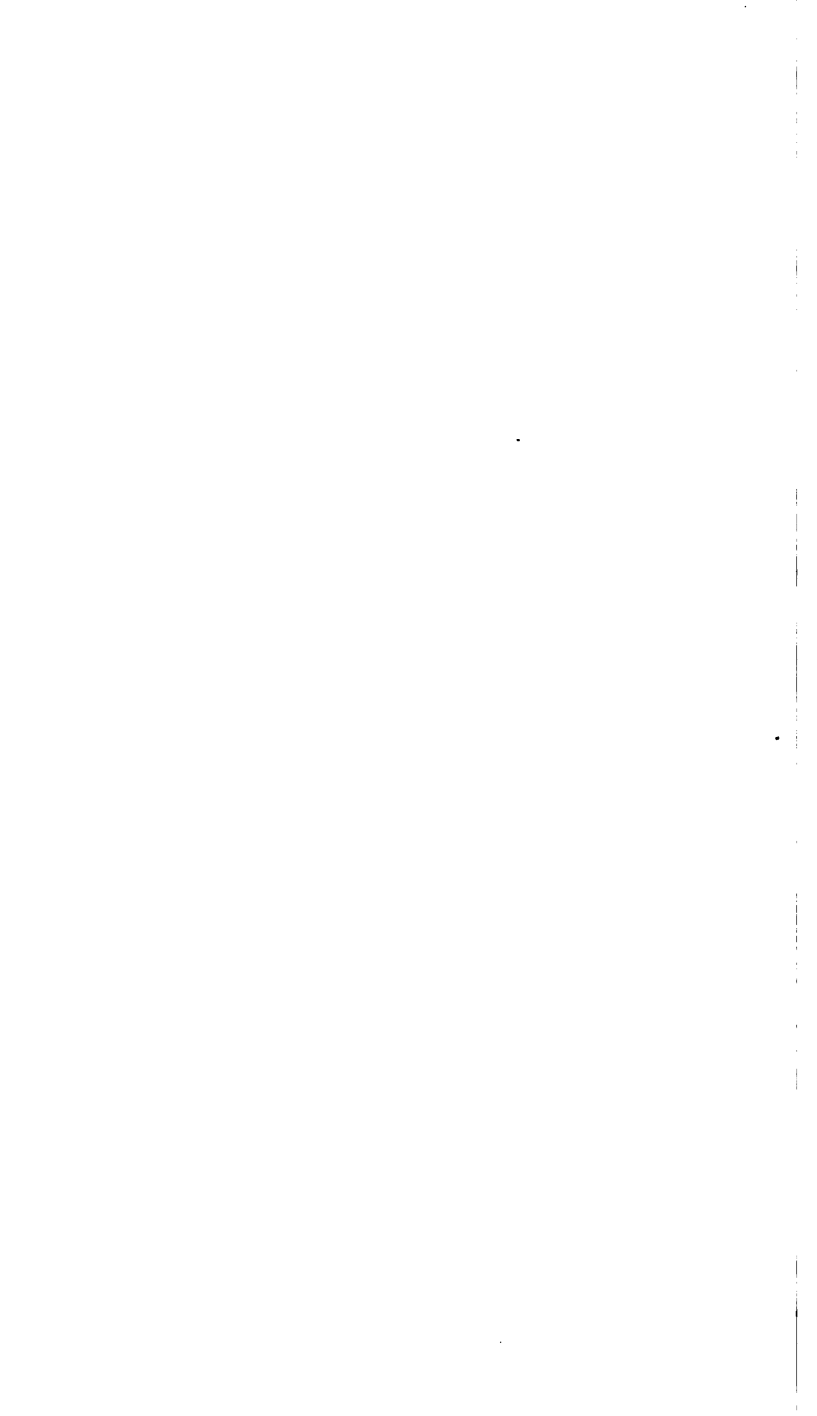
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# PIN MONEY;

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF

'THE MANNERS OF THE DAY,'—'MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS,'  
&c.

*Mrs. Catherine Grace Frances (Kendall) Gore*

---

Here's something to buy pins;—marriage is chargeable.

VENICE PRESERVED.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

PHILADELPHIA:

E. L. CAREY & A. HART, CHESNUT STREET.

BALTIMORE:

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# PIN MONEY..

## CHAPTER I.

They amble—they lisp—they nickname God's creatures.

HAMLET.

THE villa inhabited by the widow of Lord Derenzy at Twickenham, was precisely such a one as might have sheltered the mincing affectation of one of Congreve's heroines, or formed the shrine of a goddess hymned by D'Urfey, or lampooned by Lady Mary Wortley.—A blaze of Indian lacker,—a labyrinth of bronzes from the New Exchange, and enamel toys from the counters of Mrs. Chenevix,—specimens of *parfilage* presented as *étrennes* to the Lady Sophronia Mandeville, when her right honourable father performed the functions of Ambassador at the Court of Lewis XV.,—*moreaux* of old Dresden, defying the emulation of Fogg or Baldock,—specimens of turquoise *Sèvres* exceeding the rivalry of Harewood House; the atmosphere redolent of Maréchal,—even the silken lap-dog on its velvet cushion—bespoke the daintiness of the last century! Sachets, pot-pourri, and dragon china, were showered in every interstice of the room.

In this uneasy temple of fragile luxury,—a temple erected not by the genuine fairies of Titania's court but by the coxcombical elves of Count Hamilton's Tales, or the *Cabinet des Fées* who are so apt to shower down *pralines* instead of roses or dimples,—looking out upon a lawn which resembled the sunny courtliness of one of Watteau's pictures, sat Lady Derenzy on the evening of the Ash Bank fête; with Lady Lavinia Lisle, Countess Ronthorst, Miss Harcourt, a superb annuated maid of honour, and Mrs. Lucretia Wriothesley, a fragment of the ancient coterie of the Montagus and Veseys. —Each held in her hand a coffee-cup, the size of an acorn and consistency of a canary's eggshell, steaming with a hyacinthine fluid such as might have propitiated the furbelowed ghost of Pope's Belinda. In the shrill chillness of an early summer evening, they were busy with their coffee and waiting for their cassino and tredrille;—the vigour of scandal

animating their ghastly antiquity into a degree of oracular vehemence worthy the weird woman of Endor!

At the head of the conclave was Lady Derenzy herself. But oh! how different the puckered visage beneath her frizzed and powdered toupée, from the graceful dignity of feature embellishing a portrait by Gainsborough suspended at one end of the room, and graced by the inscription of "Sophronia, Baroness Derenzy;" and still more, from the group in which, with her sisters-in-law Mrs. Martha and the late Lady Rawleigh—at that time blooming hoydens in their teens—she figured in an archery-piece from the animated pencil of Reynolds; in which the late Lord Derenzy was represented bow in hand and Garter on knee. In the one she appeared a nymph,—in the other a queen; and it would be well for many a nymph and many a queen, to be startled by a personal contrast so appalling as that now palpably manifested between the fair and gracious Sophronia, and the stern, and withered, and repellent Lady Derenzy!

"Shall we have Mr. Broughley this evening?" simpered Lady Lavinia Lisle to Miss Harcourt,—the only two of the party still able to deal without spectacles, and therefore regarded as two playful little creatures whose whispermings might be excused.

"Oh! no, my dear!—no chance of such a thing. Broughley is quite infatuated by that creature Olivia Tadcaster; you know he was ever a butterfly; and it must be owned that with all her flightiness she is very fascinating."

"Fascinating!" cried Lady Lavinia—"gaudy as a macaw, —and restless as a racoon."

"You severe thing!" retorted Miss Harcourt, tapping her on the arm, and looking horridly arch. "You and Olivia were always rivals."

"No!" sighed Lady Lavinia, looking down pathetically on the funeral effigy of departed tenderness glittering on the index of her tragic volume; "I thank heaven I have been spared all those rough encounters which betide the hurricane of human passion. Let Lady Olivia possess herself of the heart of Broughley; she will meet with no obstacle from the coquetry of Lavinia Lisle,—whose widowed affections are in a better place;—but our friend has a soul,—dear Miss Harcourt,—our Broughley has a soul; and I trust I do not offend either the living or the dead, by honouring its high endowments with kindred intercommunion!"

"Vain creature, how ugly she looks!" thought the superannuated maid of honour, gazing on the fashionable wig of her rival; and very cordially would Traveller Broughley, who was at that moment buried with all his spiritual endow-

ments in a chicken-pie at Ash Bank, have echoed the ejaculation. He had no taste for mummies, except at the Royal Society; no predilection for old women, unless in a fresco of the Destinies or the nurse of Ulysses, fresh from the pickaxe at Herculaneum.

"What was that you were saying about Mr. Broughley?" said Lady Derenzy, whose age and supremacy entitled her to ask impertinent questions. "What were those young people saying about our learned friend, my dear Countess?"

"Lady Lavinia was observing," said Countess Ronthorst, whose gray eyes had been looking the curiosity she could not gratify,—for she was as deaf as a woodcock,—"that this is the day of the grand gala at Ash Bank; and that our little coterie will therefore be deprived of the vivacity of Mr. Broughley, the conversibility of Lord George, and General Lorrison—"

"We can spare them,—we can spare any one so little refined in mind and feeling as to prefer a garish crowd to our little intellectual circle," cried Mrs. Lucretia Wriothesley, propelling her words through a very long nose which acted like a naval speaking-trumpet.

"I am very much mistaken if Lorrison ventures his lum-bago on any such fool's errand!" exclaimed Lady Derenzy, angrily. "I own I am astonished at Lady Olivia!—What would her excellent mother the late Lady Trevelyan have said, to see her giving into the absurdities of these giddy-pated times!—A fête champêtre!—well do I recollect the ridicule excited by the introduction of a species of entertainment so ill-suited to our pluviose clime!—That wild lad, my friend Burgoyne, wrote his 'Maid of the Oaks' as a satire on the thing."

"But the angelic Farren so stole upon our hearts in Lady Bab Lardoon, that we forgot the moral of the piece!" cried Mrs. Lucretia.

"Ah! my dear Lady Derenzy!" sighed Miss Harcourt, "shall I ever forget a charming day of pastoral happiness I passed with you at Strawberry Hill in the year seventy-nine! I was then a giddy creature in a bib; and well do I recollect—ay! it must have been in eighty—for well do I recollect that Madame du Deffand's little dog, Tonton, was led forward by a pink ribbon as we were taking a syllabus on the lawn, and that Horace turned aside as the little innocent creature wagged its tail on approaching us;—and methought I saw a spot of moisture on his lilac lustring suit. It might have been a tear,—it might have been rain,—it *might* have been syllabus."

"Yes!" vociferated Mrs. Lucretia through her nasal tu-

conveying her snuff-box as she spoke through a labyrinth of quilted petticoats into a bottomless pit of a pocket, "Tonton was a prodigious favourite; and Horace would stand no jesting on the subject of his octogenarian amour. Mrs. Vesey, who could speak plain when she liked, once said to him—bless my soul, I forget what it was she said, but Walpole took out his pencil,—people's pencils were as ready as their wit in those days, and now nobody carries one but an excise-man,—and *scratch!*—*scratch!*—in his little yellow satin souvenir—"

"A stanza!" cried Miss Harcourt. "I was sure of it."

"He was all sensibility!" said Lady Derenzy, looking as hard as if stuffed with patent iron shavings.

Mrs. Lucretia, who had been diving into the same cavernous receptacle which received the tortoise-shell snuff-box, now produced a small morocco note-case, containing sundry bon mots, scraps, sketches, epigrams, and lampoons—the sybil-line leaves of the wizard companions of her youth,—all of which have since found their way into various *anas* and periodicals; although many of the number, which had been collected at Paris during her intimacy with the Geoffrins, and d'Epinays, and d'Houdetots, were marked with a red cross as being too *strong* for the English palate. "I think I can find it," said she, affecting to turn over the leaves with an air of uncertainty, although they were worn to a diaphanous slightness by incessant reference; and although this little arsenal of squibs and crackers was as familiarly known to its proprietress as a breviary to a priest, or a missal to la Reine Claude. "Ah! here it is!—'To Estifania.'—ay! ay! the very thing."

Lady Lavina and Miss Harcourt, who affected the vivacity of youth, now hobbled from their seats, and hung over her with breathless attention. Countess Ronthorst put down her coffee-cup, and drew a long breath as if preparatory to the act of attention; and Lady Derenzy, who loathed that scarlet depository as ardently as ever Mirabeau hated the *Livre Rouge*, or Cobbett the English pension-list, and who had been compelled to listen to this little piece of Marivaudage not less than a thousand times, was obliged to affect an interest in the business. She had only one mode of retaliation at her disposal. She was in the confidence of a loose plank in the well-waxed floor, and had a method when her guests grew tedious, of jogging it with her foot till all the hands and heads of all the mandarins were set in motion; and every jar, and every beaker, and every tazza, joined in harmonious dissonance.

"To Estifania!"—chanted Mrs. Lavinia, in defiance.

'Sweet fair! whose lips too fiercely deal  
The thunder of the skies,  
Say must our shrieking bosoms feel  
The lightning of thine eyes?

(Lavinia, Lucretia, the maid of honour, and the mandarins,  
wagged their heads in admiring cadence.)

'Ah!—no the tender hand of love  
Is gentle as the dove,—  
Venus, the child of sovereign Jove  
May not his rival prove.'"

"How sweet!" symphonised the quartette.

"May I come in?" said a little plaintive querulous voice at the half-open door; and on universal assent, a little slim spare outline of a man glided towards them on the point of his toes; a *chapeau-bras* beneath his arm, with his hair frizzed out à l'oiseau royal.

"Ah, General!" cried Miss Harcourt—"I knew you would not desert us."

"*Enfin après deux jours je te revois, Arbate!*" exclaimed Mrs. Lucretia, with great superfluity of emphasis; and the general exclamation of delight and welcome which arose on the entrance of the antiquated Lovelace, deepened into a shrill tumult of rapture, resembling a symphony of triangles, when General Lorrison's nephew—Lord George, the fashionable lyrist, followed him towards the sofa. With an air resembling the uncouth friskiness of a calf trained into affectation by the labours of a dancing master, and a cream-coloured face which in assuming an air of sentiment became irresistibly comic, he glissaded towards them;—accepting a seat between the maid of honour and Lady Margaret with a smile such as would have proved the destruction of the *Précieuses Ridicules*, while the General devoted his urbanity to the lady of the house.

"We were apprehensive you had been seduced away to Ash Bank," sighed Miss Harcourt, deploying her fan and looking the Ranelagh coquette, while her rival affected an ingenious and Phyllis-like air.

"To Ath Bank!" lisped Lord George with a start of fastidious horror, "Am I in the habit of micthing in the indith-cwiminate mobth of the fathionable world that you thould taxth me with thuch a pwedilection?"

"I understand," said Lady Margaret, "that Lord Calder,

the Duchess of Whitehaven, Lady Osterley, Lady Newby, and all the most exclusive set of London will be there."

"Far be it from me to impugn your Ladyship's authority, or to utter a syllable in disparagement of persons potholed of all the precedents which wank, opulence, and fashion can bestow; but pardon me, Lady Magawet, pardon me Mith Harcourt,—if without wounding on my own—"

"George!" exclaimed the General, instigated by an unusual flutter of spirit, which rendered him for the first time in his life so disregarding of etiquette as to interrupt a speaker having the ear of the house,—“what was the name of that very gentlemanly man who sat opposite me at dinner to-day, and whom Lady Wroxworth talked of bringing here this evening. Surely I am not mistaken in stating it to be Waddestone?"

"Impossible!" shrieked every female present, "Lady Wroxworth has too much sense!" cried Lady Lavinia.

"Lady Wroxworth has too much feeling!" said Countess Ronthorst.

"Lady Wroxworth has too much principle!" ejaculated the maid of honour.

"Lady Wroxworth knows too well what is due to herself!" mouthed Mrs. Lucretia.

"Lady Wroxworth knows too well what is due to *me*!" said Lady Derenzy with majestic dignity; and rising from her seat like Semiramis from her throne, she rang the bell, and addressed herself most imperially to the astonished butler. "Wathen! if Lady Wroxworth presents herself here to-night, you will have the kindness to express to her Ladyship with the respectful deference due to all my accustomed guests, that *this* evening my circle is limited to my own privileged and familiar friends. You understand me!—tea and the card-tables!"

"You understand me, tea and the card-tables!" ejaculated the astonished domestic as he traversed the vestibule. "The housekeeper may perhaps understand setting out tea, and John or Thomas the quadrille table;—but if any born mortal can understand my Lady when she gets into her tantrums, he never stood in Jeremiah Wathen's shoes."

But the amazement depicted on the rotund visage of the well-powdered butler, was trifling in comparison with that of General Lorrison and his fair devotees. He had often compared the majestic Sophronia with Catherine of the North, and himself to the Prince de Ligne; but he now trembled beneath the grandeur of her ire. Not so the female majority of the circle; they prepared themselves for the unusual recreation of a scene, and were delighted. The Gene-

ral was a charming creature refined even to spiritualization, but they knew all his little pastoral gallantries by heart; Lord George was "a man of wit and fashion about town," but his club *sobriquet* of "curds and whey," was only too characteristic of the sickly monotony of his discourse. A fight,—a war of words between Lady Derenzy and Lady Wroxworth,—was quite a new feature in the annals of the Twickenham ceterie; and never did Roman emperor sicken with such impatience for the sanguinary struggle of the Amphitheatre, as did the spirits of the four eager visitors, while they sat fidgeting with anxiety for the sound of coming wheels on the gravel,—the signal of combat. General Lorrison said not a word; the fact that he had unwittingly dined in company with a soapboiler decomposed and vitiated the thin current of his blood; while Lord George, who perceived that something was sorely amiss,—looked pensively interrogative and waited the event.

At length a fatal sound became audible in the distance; and when the rotatorial rumble acquired the grittiness of near approach, Countess Ronthorst nodded significantly to Mrs. Lucretia, and Lady Lavinia depressed the corner of her lip towards the maid of honour on whose cap the wiry flowers quivered with excitement. Lady Derenzy, meanwhile, affecting an air of magnanimous self-possession, distributed her measured prose to their unlistening ears, like a college-tutor in a lecture-room.

There was a momentary pause!—Again the trituration of the gravel spoke gratingly of the departing chariot; and the hissing of restored respiration in Lady Derenzy's drawing-room accompanied the sound. But in another minute the door was thrown open by Wathen, and Lady Wroxworth—*alone*—in her accustomed gray satin gown and high-plaited cap,—toddled into the room.—What a disappointment!

"Good-evening, my dear Sophronia," said the kind-hearted old lady, wholly unsuspecting of the storm which had been preparing to explode.

"I thought I *knew* my friend!" observed Lady Derenzy, theatrically offering her hand;—and every eye was now reproachfully turned on the poor little general.

"I was satisfied there was some misunderstanding," said Lady Lavinia.

"I never conceived it possible," cried Mrs. Lucretia.

"I guessed it would prove a false alarm!" whispered the maid of honour.

"Lady Wroxworth!" said the perplexed Lorrison, waving his hand in suppression of their murmurs, "Satisfy the doubts of these ladies, and my own embarrassment, by informing

them whether you did not express an intention of introducing to their society this evening, a person with whom I had the honour of dining at Lord Wroxworth's table?"

"The individual in the velvet waistcoat," faltered Lord George.

"Mr. Waddlestone?" inquired Lady Wroxworth, in the calmest tone, and plainest English, while a faint shriek burst from the clay-coloured lips of Lady Lavinia. "Yes! indeed, my dear Sophronia, I was almost in hopes of procuring you the pleasure of my friend Mr. Waddlestone's company; but he is so much in request, and had been so long engaged to the Duchess of Whitehaven, that I was obliged to give up the point. I could not prevail on him for even half an hour. From something he said, I fancy he had heard our little coterie reviled as a *bureau d'esprit*; or had been tired to death at Lady Olivia's with the fatigue of Princess Guéménées' eternal chatter. The ambassador brought Mr. Waddlestone back with him, that he might be in time for our dinner; but the Princess assured me Lord Calder and Lady Rawleigh could scarcely be tempted to give him up. Lord Wroxworth however would never have forgiven him had he disappointed us."

Can thutch thingth be, and overcome uth like a thummer cloud,  
Without our thpethial wonderment!

lispd the lyrical lord.—But Lady Derenzy had been preparing a speech.

"It is now some years," said she, "since the independence of America, and the influence exerted in this country by the return of a large body of enlightened men habituated to the demoralizing spectacle of an equalization of rank, was supposed to exert a pernicious influence on the minds of the secondary and inferior classes of Great Britain. At that critical moment I whispered to my husband, 'Derenzy! be true to yourself, and the world will be true to you. Let the aristocracy of Great Britain unite in support of the Order,—and it will maintain its ground against the universe!' Lord Derenzy took my advice, and the country was saved!"

"Again, when the assemblage of the States General of France,—the fatal tocsin of the Revolution,—spread consternation and horror throughout the higher ranks of every European country, and the very name of the guillotine operated like a spell on the British peerage, I whispered to my husband, 'Derenzy! be true to yourself, and the world will be true to you. Let the aristocracy of Great Britain unite in support of the Order,—and it will maintain its ground against

the universe!"—Again Lord Derenzy took my advice, and again the country was saved!

"A terrible period is now approaching;—a day of encroachment on our privileges,—of abrogation of our rights! My husband is no more,—and it may be that the Oracle of Dodona has lost its charm;—but to you, my tried friends and familiar associates, I consider it my duty to repeat the warning. 'Be true to yourselves and the world will be true to you. Let the aristocracy of Great Britain unite in support of the Order,—and it will maintain its ground against the universe!'" And as she terminated her harangue, Lady Derenzy emphatically jarred her coffee-cup on the table, which added a solemnity to the scene like the falling hat of Corporal Trim. The descent of the cup was as if a heavy lump of clay had been kneaded in its concavity!—

"How ineffectually gwand!" said the cream-coloured poet.

"How sublime!" cried the general.

"How beautiful!" sighed the ladies.

"Poor thing!" thought Lady Wroxworth, who never dreamed of connecting this tirade with her purposed introduction of a man so polished, so enlightened, so pleasing, and so popular as her friend the soapboiler to her friend Sophronia. "She certainly is flighty at times. I am glad I did not persuade Waddlestone to come to-night. He would have been sadly bored with all these rhapsodies."

"And who had your lively favourite Princess Guéménée to amuse her at Ash Bank?" inquired Lady Lavinia Lisle.

"Every body, I fancy," said Lady Wroxworth good-humouredly. "But her own party consisted of Count and Countess Rodensfels, Lady Rochester and Mr. Vaux,—'swan and shadow' you know;—my little niece Louisa, flirting with Lord Putney,—and Sophronia's little niece Lady Rawleigh, flirting with Lord Calder."

"Thank heaven!" piously ejaculated Lady Derenzy. "I rejoice that my nephew's wife is restored to some sense of propriety; I was apprehensive of hearing her name connected with that of the repugnant individual already so obnoxious to my feelings."

"What a thtwrong mind!" said Lord George suppressing a yawn; while the domestics, to the infinite relief of the party, proceeded to arrange the card-tables; and the accustomed little gallantries commenced between the general and the rest of the old women concerning partners, and seats, and cutting-in, and cutting out. His compliments to the withered anatomies who courted his spectral smiles were as smooth and flowery as the brocaded waistcoat of his great grand-sire.

## CHAPTER II.

Like as the culver on the bared bough  
 Sits mourning for the absence of her mate,  
 And in her song sends many a wishful vow  
 For his return that seems to linger late ;  
 So I alone, now left disconsolate  
 Mourn to myself the absence of my love,  
 And wandering here and there, all desolate,  
 Seek with my plaints to match that mournful dove.

SPENSER.

BUT the storms of that brightest of summer days had not been confined to the antique coterie of Twickenham,—that entomological museum preserved in amber for the speculations of the curious in human nature. Lightnings had flashed in the verdant solitudes of Ash Bank,—and Tartarean thunders reverberated through the atmosphere of Essex!

But lest those who are apt to connect the idea of that vaccine county with the ague and the webbed foot should be inclined to depreciate the beauties of Lady Olivia Tadcaster's villa, it may be necessary to premise that Ash Bank was contiguous to one of the wildest solitudes of that ancient forest, which—however defiled by its association with the Lord Mayor's Hunt—presents some of the most exquisite specimens of woodland scenery to be found in England. Diverging from the Epping-road through thickets of weeping birch and copse-wood, the London guests found themselves refreshed with a simplicity of universal verdure, more cheering to the eye than the flowery parterre or clustering bloom of the finest shrubbery.

It was in gliding through the tranquil coolness of this verdant solitude, that Mr. Vaux, who occupied the second seat in Lord Calder's travelling-carriage, suddenly inquired,—after the weariness of a long political discussion, which had extended beyond four milestones,—

“And what do you intend to do with Lady Rawleigh?”

“Whatever she pleases ;—but why do you ask?”

“Because she takes us both so much out of our way this morning.”

“You are not, surely, a pretendant on the list?”

“Heaven forbid !—I have no predilection for naïveté ;—

you know you never could tempt me to admire the *nature* of Gainsborough's pigs."

"Two of us are sophisticated, as Lear's fool observes."

"Whatever *she* pleases!" recapitulated Mr. Vaux. "That has not been usually your measure of action under similar circumstances."

"I never was *in* similar circumstances;—I never found myself irrevocably captivated by the graces of a beautiful woman in love with her husband,—and in favour with God and man."

"Allow me to match your courteous allusion to Lear's motley by thanking the gods, with Audrey, that they have not made me poetical!"

"I wish there were less prose in the case!—I never saw anything more determinately matter of fact than the domestic happiness of these Rawleighs."

"I never saw *you* so desperately in love since you left Eton.—You are as blind as Cupid himself!—Recollect that little story I quoted to you last night after Lady Margaret Fieldham's authority."

"Some idle scandal of old Huntingfield's."

"And recollect Sir Robert Morse's history of Rawleigh's jealousy about the attendance of your mysterious friend at Lawrence's gallery."

"One of Morse's thick-headed misconceptions."

"And yet—scandal or no scandal—methinks if I had such propitious tools to work with—as a jealous husband and an injured wife, I would advance more with my suit than you have done with yours."—

It might be that Lord Calder was unwilling to expose his *plan de campagne*; for instead of replying to this taunt, he began to point out the sylvan beauty of the broomy knolls and fern-crested thickets, through which they were passing; and in another minute they reached the Swiss cottage which served as a lodge to the villa.

Lord Calder, in seeking, and persuading his sister to seek, an invitation to the fête champêtre of such a person as Lady Olivia Tadcaster, had acted with the full anticipation of its tediousness before his eyes; and regarded the sacrifice as one fully worthy to be offered on the shrine of his new goddess. From season to season in the course of his fashionable existence, he had witnessed the failure of fifty similar projects; had seen the most lavish cost, the most fanciful preparations expended to produce nothing but fatigue, exhaustion, and repentance; and he satisfied himself from the restless and wonder-seeking tone of the lady of Ash Bank, that every previous blunder honoured by his presence would be exceeded

on the present occasion! But poor Lady Olivia, discomfited by her recent misadventure concerning her Bohemian protégée, had for once submitted her own opinion to that of her niece; and however prone to interfere in the direction of other people's affairs, had delegated her own to the guidance of Frederica.

Now Lady Rawleigh, at all times inclined by her natural predilections in favour of simplicity, felt herself at the passing moment so incapable of exertion, so preoccupied in heart and soul, so averse from elaborate displays, that she persuaded the anxious hostess to forego the beaten track of charades and tableaux, minstrels and jugglers and Dutch fairs, and confide the cause of her breakfast to the hands of Nature.

"Your visitors, my dear aunt," said Frederica, "are persons tired out by the monotony of these things, which are only endurable amid the snows and tedium of a Christmas party. They are weary of the heat and glare and dust of London; and as probably none of the multitude have condescended to look at their own majestic parks and beautiful gardens enamelled by the richness of June, for the last twenty years, give them a tantalizing specimen of all they renounce in the charms of Ash Bank. Give them the country in all its purity."—

"And do nothing at all for their entertainment?—My dear, they will be bored to death,—order their carriages, and go back to town."

"Their horses will require rest; and they will be glad enough to amuse themselves with your charming gardens, and with those grass terraces which render the home-view from Ash Bank so beautiful. Let walks be mown and rolled through the plantations; and, depend on it you will find the spring foliage, and the wild flowers, and the untamed aviary of this lonely spot, far more attractive than the artificial garlands and variegated lamps of a regular breakfast-giver."

"At least I will have down Jarrin, and give them something to talk about in the originality of the breakfast;—and it shall all be disposed in Turkish marquees."

"I recommend you to have down two or three first-rate cooks from Ude's academy; and let your dinner be served in the banquetting-room. People will be tired with walking about, and disposed for more substantial fare than jellies and caramels."

"Well then, I will have all the girls from the neighbouring villages dressed in a picturesque costume, to wait at table."

"Far better satisfy yourself with your own domestics, in

their usual dress, and the persons usually provided who understand their duty."

"My dear, it shall all be as you please," said her ladyship, her parsimony prompting her to escape on such easy terms; and when Lady Rawleigh arrived on the preceding evening, she was gratified to perceive that her advice had been strictly followed;—that Musard's band alone had been bespoken for the juvenile guests, and that preparations had been made for a very handsome dinner,—such as might have been eaten with quite as much propriety, but not half so much enjoyment, in Grosvenor or Berkeley-square any day at eight o'clock.

On the first coup d'œil of the little park, presenting neither streamers nor tents nor pavilions, nor temporary decorations of any description, some of the younger guests it is true were inclined to be disappointed;—they felt that they should see quite enough of briary coppices, and verdant holmes, and shadowy plantations, on their return to Yorkshire, or Dorsetshire, or Kent, at the close of the season. But Nature is an unsilenceable monitress; and before an hour had elapsed, they were inclined to acknowledge that Lord Henry was far more agreeable in a walk on the smooth turf among the green glades of Ash Bank, than in a galloppe at Almack's; and that Lord Putney had never been so charming as when seated at their feet in a natural berceau of wild honeysuckles.

But if the blooming Lady Louisas and buoyant Lady Sophias were satisfied with this unexpected change of pleasures, the gratification of such persons as Lady Rochester and Lord Calder, was far more genuine. All the stage-trick of artificial life was so familiarly known to *them*,—the wooden trap-doors of the pantomime were so glaringly apparent to their experienced eyes,—that the transition to the naked truth of unadorned nature was indeed refreshing. Lady Rochester forgot to examine into the delicate complexion of the wild roses festooning every hedgerow; and her brother, seated by Frederica's side in a bosquet of impervious evergreens looking out on the sunny landscape and the gay groups stationed on the various terraces, felt that he had not been so satisfactorily placed throughout the brilliant festivities of the season. Yet even there, he could not find himself close at the ear of Eve, without betraying the original impulse of the Satanic tempter.

"I perceive," said he, in his most silvery tones of blandishment, "that you have debarred Sir Brooke from the happiness of attending you this morning."

"You forget his parliamentary duties."

"Surely I have seen more than one member here to-day?"

"Oh, yes!—twenty;—but some Distillery Bill comes on

to-day, in which Rawleigh's borough is particularly interested; and Mr. Lexley persuaded him it was his duty to be on the spot."

"And what did Lady Rawleigh persuade him?"

"To do exactly what suited him best; a certain mode of proving the efficaciousness of her advice."

"Quite right!—you are resolved to be adored beyond the limit of conjugal idolatry, and have chosen the only safe plan:—universal liberty of conscience,—universal freedom of action. If Sir Brooke Rawleigh preferred his dusty ride in Hyde-park, you were very wise not to compel him to the endurance of the dewy landscapes of Ash Bank. There is no accounting for obliquity of taste."

"Rawleigh detests the Park," said Frederica, reddening.

"Then Vaux and I were mistaken."

"In what?—did you fancy he had a predilection for that gritty *bel respiro*?"

"We fancied we met him on our road hither, assisting Lord Launceston to escort a lady who was mounted on your favourite Arabian."

"Indeed?" faltered Lady Rawleigh;—"was she tall or short,—dark or fair?"

"Of a fine showy person; and as far as her veil would permit us to decide, a beautiful creature. But doubtless we were mistaken in her companions."

"I fear not!" involuntarily ejaculated Lady Rawleigh; and Lord Calder, surprised to find her indignation so limited in its expression, cast a sidelong glance towards her, and perceived that those beautiful eyes were now listlessly fixed on the wide landscape and swimming with tears. He remained discreetly silent, to give time for the exercise and repression of the emotions he had excited;—and when he fancied the bitter drops must have been driven back again into her heart, recommenced his persecution.

"It seems to have been a very sudden fancy on the part of Sir Brooke Rawleigh to go into Parliament; or surely Lady Derenzy's interest might have managed it for him without driving him to the resource of so degraded a political sponsor as Mr. Lexley,—or a representation which has been made a cloak or impunity to so many spendthrift libertines at Martwich!—You should have advised him better."

"My advice was not asked till the affair was settled."

"But surely on your marriage, some explanation was made of Rawleigh's public views?"

"I never heard of politics being introduced into a matrimonial contract; but I fancy at *that* period Sir Brooke entertained no intention of becoming part of the legislation."

"Indeed!" said Lord Calder,—and it was an *indeed* very much resembling that of *Iago*.

"Why should you appear so surprised?"—inquired Frederica, whose perception was now prodigiously quickened by any allusion to the actions or motives of her husband—"Is there anything wonderful in a sudden predilection for a political career,—is there any stated period for parliamentary tendencies?"

"I have a theory which says—*YES!*" answered his lordship with an insinuating smile; "and my surprise, arose in *this* instance from its singular corroboration of my peculiar whims and fancies. I always imagine that I can discover in my friends, in the second year of their wedded life, a sudden mania for clubs and a decided partiality for Parliament."

"You mean that their home begins to grow distasteful to them?—But *we* have not yet achieved that fatal period; *we* are still in our *first* year of probation."

"Then you must have begun your reign by a very injudicious mode of government;—you must have shown yourself too arbitrary—or—*too kind* a wife!"

Frederica started!—she fancied that the consciousness which now swelled her bosom and tingled in her cheeks, arose from self-conviction. "Lord Calder is right!" she thought; "*I have* been too kind a wife;—I have disgusted him with my servility—my dotting attachment. It is *my folly* which has driven him into the society of Mr. Lexley—into the snares of Miss Elbany. I have no right to be angry with him,—it is all my own fault; but thank Heaven I have time to amend my error."

Lord Calder no longer feared the *tears* of his companion; he saw that his last arrow had hit home, that she was piqued—as much against herself as her absent husband; nor was he inclined to quarrel with the bright flush of repressed indignation which now tinged her cheeks, or with the gaiety which imparted a sort of unnatural wildness to her conversation. She had already resolved that Rawleigh should not hear of any listlessness occasioned by his absence from the fête—of mortification arising from his own engagements during her visit to Ash Bank. For the first time, the frank and ingenuous Frederica assumed the affectations of coquetry;—smiled artificially on Lord Calder, flirted with Sir Robert Morse, jested with Lord Putney, and hailed the incense burnt upon an altar wantonly abandoned by its high priest, with all the apparent intoxication of gratified vanity. Wonderful was the change operated in Lady Rawleigh's favour with the world in general, by this unusual vivacity! Indifferent observers are not nice in detecting the shades of distinction between nature and art; particularly where the assumed

character is more pleasing to their selfish views than the original simplicity. Even Lord Calder was delighted; for although he had the good taste to prefer his victim's ordinary tone of graceful and tranquil modesty, he regarded her at present as a puppet acting under his impulsion, and accrediting his infinite skill in social charlatanry.

At dinner, she found herself seated by Lady Olivia's desire at the head of the table of honour, with Lord Calder on one side and the young Duke of Draxfield on the other; Lady Rochester and Vaux, and the Rodenfels, being their near neighbours,—as well as Broughley, Mrs. William Erskyne, and Lord Putney.

"My dear Fred.! where have you been hiding yourself all the morning?" cried Louisa, soon after they were seated. "Lord Vardington—your new and devoted adorer—and myself, were in search of you in every 'dingle and bosky bourne, from side to side.' He was as usual charming;—but being engaged to dine in town with stupid old Lord and Lady Wroxworth, abandoned the pursuit, and went off with Princess Guéménée, just as with the help of an opera-glass we contrived to discover you at a distance, building a nest on the skirts of the forest, in a holly-bush with Lord Calder."

"Is Lord Vardington gone!" exclaimed Frederica, without noticing her friend's ill-natured allusions. "I am sincerely sorry for it; I was not aware that Lady Olivia even expected him."

"Oh! fie—when he explicitly informed me that he was indebted for his introduction to Lady Rawleigh's and Lord Launceston's kind interposition."

"Your ladyship must not attempt to disavow your friends," said Lord Calder, excessively piqued by this explanation; "you see they are resolved not to allow your partiality to lose its influence with the world."

"Lord Vardington!" exclaimed Lady Rochester, to whom the newly-inheriting peer had been something more than friend in his early days of fashionable cadetship. "Has he been here this morning? I have not seen him since his return to England. Is he much altered—how is he looking?"

"I fancy his lordship has been a resident abroad some twenty, or five-and-twenty years," said Broughley, with the accuracy of an historian. "Being a Roman Catholic, he found ready acceptance on the continent, even during the war."

"And as he was probably settled at Lyons or Rome before I was settled in my cradle," observed Mrs. Erskyne, "it is not to be expected that I should form an accurate estimate of the changes effected by time on his outward man."

"He is still remarkably handsome," said Lady Rawleigh, to deprecate the rising ire of Lady Rochester. "But his inward man can scarcely have been so refined and intelligent at five-and-twenty as at the present day."

"I never observed any extra-ordinary demonstration of ability on the part of my Lord Vardington," observed traveller Broughley, devouring his cutlet, *à la Française*, with the help of a knife, a napkin, and his own fingers. "I have repeatedly dined in his company in Italy."

"A circumstance which may enable you to judge of his capacity for swallowing *frittura*, or macaroni, but which does not alter my opinion of his conversational powers," said Mrs. Erskyne angrily. "*Du reste*, Lady Rochester may possibly be enabled to judge for herself between the sapling and the oak; for Lord Vardington has promised to steal away from the Wroxworths, and return here. It is only an hour and a half's drive, with good horses,—and Lady Olivia promises to amuse us till after midnight; so that he may come in for two hours of my undivided attention, and as much of Frederica's as Lord Calder can spare."

"Dispose of Lady Rawleigh's as lavishly as you please," whispered Lord Putney; "but do not defraud me of my due in your own. You belong to me, at least till dinner is over; and I might as well have you talking where I trust my friend Erskyne is listening—in the House of Commons,—as amusing all these people. Remember, I allow nothing beyond a whisper till the ice is on the table."

"You are wrong," said Louisa, with a degree of flightiness worthy his own levity. "Whenever you have anything particularly particular to say, beware of lowering your voice. When you assumed your mysterious under-tone just now, Mr. Vaux was stretching his ears, while he affected to busy himself with his chicken and its *papillote*; but now that I dare his inquisition by my every-day mode of speech, you see he has returned to his duty of pouring *huile à la rose* on the stormy billows of Lady Rochester's ill-humour."

Vaux, who had been listening to every syllable uttered by the pretty little asp opposite, gave her a look of most expressive bitterness on this explanation; but promising himself to seize some more propitious moment for her chastisement, he occupied the interval by promoting those sallies of witty animation, in which he perceived his friend Calder more than usually disposed to indulge. As soon as Broughley's learned and ponderous commentaries were buried under the oppression of a meal as comprehensive as his own travels, the brilliancy of the general conversation in Frederica's vicinity rose beyond the ordinary level; and Lady Olivia, when

she occasionally directed her eye-glass towards her niece from a remote corner of the room, was charmed to perceive that the coterie so unexpectedly attracted to Ash Bank by the charms of Lady Rawleigh appeared as much enchanted as if frequenting one of its own habitual and exclusive haunts.

Frederica herself neither noticed nor applauded the efforts passing around her. From the moment Lord Calder's nefarious intelligence caused the vibration of that discordant string within her bosom, all the anguish she had experienced at the moment of Mrs. Derenzy's indiscreet revelations was renewed in the depths of her heart; and the sting of the coiling snake became the more insupportable, that she felt herself compelled to endure its havoc with a smiling countenance. She seemed to listen,—she seemed to laugh,—and occasionally some comment or inquiry burst from her lips, which from its singularity or strange inapplication, elicited a general laugh.—Vaux and his party, so familiarized with the affectations of fine ladies, fancying she was ambitious of appearing *odd* and original, applauded her attempts as a perfect triumph; while Frederica,—beholding nothing in the convivial multitude which filled the banqueting-room, but a mighty mass of importunate human life, accepted with unconscious bewilderment the champagne tendered to her glass; which she replaced on the table without knowing that she had quaffed its treacherous draught,—without feeling that she had even raised it to her lips!—

At length the feast was at an end; and the guests unwearied by their tranquil pleasures of the morning, were glad to lounge in the twilight coolness of the lawn, or among the shrubberies, while fairy hands were preparing the banqueting-room for dancing. In less than an hour, it displayed a blaze of renewed illumination; light strains resounded from its domed roof, and light footsteps re-echoed their inspiration. Frederica, who had never danced since her marriage,—not from prudery but a disinclination for the amusement,—suffered herself to be persuaded by Sir Robert Morse who longed to tear her from Lord Calder's gouty side, that it was her business as mistress of the revels to open the ball; and much against her will, she was now obliged to exhibit to the admiration of the whole room that graceful symmetry of form, and tranquillity of movement, by which Miss Rawdon had formerly distinguished herself in the giddy throng at Almack's.

But as soon as the dance was ended, she found Lady Olivia waiting to extricate her from the further assiduities of her partner. "My dear Fred.!" said she, drawing her into the vestibule, "do not waste another minute on the amusement

of that foolish boy ;—it matters nothing what verdict such a person as Sir Robert Morse may pass to-morrow in the park on the Ash Bank fête. I own, my dear, you have exerted yourself charmingly,—done your very best for me,—and I am infinitely obliged to you ;—never saw you in such good looks, or such good spirits, Frederica ;—but now you must come and help me with the Rodenfels and the diplomatic set. You know they are none of them dancing people, and Lady Rochester cannot do without her *écarté* ; so I have ordered card-tables in Henry the Seventh's Chapel."

"But, my dear aunt, I cannot play,—I never touched cards in my life except in a family game of *cassino* with mamma and yourself. I know nothing of *écarté*."

"I do not ask you to play ; but just interest yourself in the formation of the parties, by drawing your friends to the table. You see, my love, if I give such men as Calder and Vaux, and Rodenfels, and Villette, nothing to amuse them between dinner and supper, their memories will be quite clear to detect all the *réchauffés* and stale jellies with which *Méringue* will economise his bill of fare."

"I will do my utmost to blunt their observation !" said Lady Rawleigh, smiling at the restless tactics of her aunt ; and she found no difficulty in persuading Lady Rochester, Lady Blanche Thornton, and Lady Barbara Dynley, followed by their little subservient army of admirers, to crowd towards the apartment so incongruously selected for the attractions of the *écarté*-table.

Still the party wanted spirit ;—the players were not habituated to each other or to the locale ; there was no eager lady of the house, to appoint, decide, divide, distribute,—prevent the ladies from cheating and the gentlemen from quarrelling. Lady Olivia was off to a consultation with Monsieur *Méringue* ; and Lady Rawleigh was lingering indolently on a remote ottoman, listening or seeming to listen to the gentle flow of Lord Calder's soothing eloquence.

"My dear Lady Rawleigh," cried Lady Barbara, approaching her, probably with a view to the interruption of a *liaison* interfering materially with her former influence at Calder House, "do pray come nearer to the table, and animate our proceedings a little. Let me put down a guinea in your name on our side, and you will bring us luck."

"Certainly,—if you will be the banker to my unprovided treasury, and will not ask me to play."

And in five minutes, Frederica was informed that she had won, and asked whether she would deposit the same sum.

"Put them *both* down," she replied to Mr. Vaux, who had ignorantly brought the two guineas to the sofa, from which

Lord Calder now rising, whispered a few words to his friend; but only to return with fresh eagerness to his seat, where he soon contrived to engross the entire interest of his companion from the murmur and occasional exclamations of the *écarté* table, by allusions—now indirect, now agonizingly personal—to Rawleigh's proceedings. It is a very malignant symptom when a man presumes to address a married woman with strictures on the conduct of her husband!

Occasionally this interesting topic was interrupted by Mr. Vaux's diplomatic messages of "Lady Rawleigh, you have won—Lady Rawleigh, you have lost;—Lady Rawleigh, will you double your stake?"—all of which fluctuations, had Frederica taken the trouble to give her attention to the subject, she would have supposed to be limited within the moderate boundary of a ten-pound note; and it was a stroke of horror and amazement to her, when she found her attention suddenly claimed by Lord Vardington, who had been standing for some time unobserved beside the card-table, and who, instead of accosting her with his ordinary grace of address, observed abruptly:—"Good evening, Lady Rawleigh,—are you not rash in confiding the management of your finances to the general mercy?—Are you aware that you have already lost a hundred and eighty guineas?"

## CHAPTER III.

RESOURCE. But how can you lug them into a statute of bankruptcy? They are no dealers, you know.

PILLAGE. No dealers? Yes, but they are.

RESOURCE. Of what kind?

PILLAGE. Why they are dealers of cards.

FOOTE.

FREDERICA was scarcely less startled by this unexpected intelligence, and the mode in which it was communicated, than she had been by the fatal announcement put forth in all the pomp and circumstance of glorious circumlocution by Mrs. Martha Derenzy, touching the unsuspected frailties of her husband. Yet such was her inexperience in the details and hazards of the gaming-table, that the amount of her loss did not appear so frightful as to a greater adept in the vicissitudes of *écarté*. It seemed as if a sum so quickly and easily lost might be as quickly and easily regained;—that Lord Vardington had only intercepted her fortunes of the evening at some unlucky crisis;—and firmly believing that the aspect of affairs must mend in the course of a few more deals, she repressed her anxiety, and replied with as much self-possession as she could assume, “I was indeed little aware of the extent of my stake—I must watch more narrowly over my speculations. And rising from her seat she advanced towards the crowd at the card table; followed by Lord Calder, who in spite of his secret inclination to massacre her officious Mentor, judged it prudent to affect unconcern in the business by entering into desultory conversation with Vardington.

Now Lady Rawleigh’s experience of cards and card-players was comprised in the sober drowsy game of long whist, peculiar to her mother’s moderate circle of dowagers; and the arcadian academy of tredillers, quadrillers, and cassinists, into which she had been inaugurated on occasion of one or two formal visits to Sophronia of Twickenham. She had never seen the vexation of a loser extend beyond a peevish sigh, or asthmatic grunt;—she had never seen the triumph of a winner expand beyond the buckram simper of General Lorrison on dropping two half crowns into his spangled card-purse; or the tripsome sprightliness of Lady Lavinia Lisle’s parting curtsy, after adding a new sovereign to her collection of coin of the realm. She was, in short, wholly and totally

ignorant of the Satanic excitement of gaming in all its branches! What, therefore, was her amazement on reaching the cluster round the *écarté*-table,—where a vista was immediately opened for her by the male idlers forming the back-ground of the group,—to perceive the lovely Lady Barbara Dynley seated in all the suspense of “*Je propose*,” and her antagonist, Count Rodenfels, throwing a glance of scrutiny at once over his own indifferent hand, and her agonized countenance; while Lady Rochester,—with her artificial bloom heightened by a fever of agitation, such as would have driven her to distraction could a mirror have been placed before her,—sat watching the result in speechless anxiety. Every female visage interested in the event, however young, however beautiful, was sharpened into a degree of ungracious asperity; while on some of the ancient visages of the dowagers and sexagenarian spinsters, characters of cupidity and ferocity were engraven as if by the talons of some demoniacal agent!

The men who owned a stake in the golden piles and bank-notes heaped upon the table, more accustomed to subdue the evidence of evil passions, and more alive to the *mauvais ton* of evincing any eagerness in the pursuit, affected to whisper to each other with a tone of gaiety almost hysterical; while parched lips, bloodshot eyes, and a distempered spot upon the cheek, sufficed to betray their inward perturbation. There was not one among the party whose demeanour was natural, or whose voice was pitched in its ordinary key; and no sooner was the game over, and the spoils in process of division and subdivision, than Frederica found herself absolutely blushing at the disputations and shabby vehemence of her own sex, and the angry looks darting from the eyes of the losing cavaliers. As she noticed the smile of gloating exultation with which Lady Barbara swept her allotted handful of sovereigns into her reticule, all the grace of action, and all the charm of countenance she had formerly admired in Mr. Dynley's wife seemed to subside from her imagination; and while the arrangements for the ensuing game were formed with the same contentious and ill-bred selfishness, Lady Rawleigh found a moment to express to the triumphant Lady Barbara her regret at being so largely indebted to her assistance.

“You owe me nothing!” cried the exhilarated winner. “As you and Lord Calder chose to be *ex-parte* abettors of our *écarté*-table, we have made you play in opposition,—so that you can settle your account with him at the end of the evening. Mr. Vaux has been booking for you both; and as *you* have won on the last two games, I recommend you

not to desert your luck. Play on, and you will bring yourself round in an hour."

Through ignorance or indifference, Lady Rawleigh accepted these counsels; and being soon wearied by the heated atmosphere round the table, and disgusted by the tone of avidity displayed by her female friends, she again retired beyond the limits of the circle, and seating herself in an open window became once more engrossed in conversation with Calder and Lord Vardington.

"I am happy to perceive," said the latter, in a low voice, as she threw herself into a vacant chair, "that although Lady Rawleigh pledges her *purse* to the *écarté*-table, she cannot fix her *interest* upon its chances."

"I am playing merely to oblige Lady Olivia," she replied, surprised by his unwonted gravity of tone; "and for the first, and probably the last time."

"You venture on a high stake for a beginner," said her new acquaintance in the same admonitory voice, which caused certain half-uttered imprecations to interpose between the clenched teeth of Lord Calder.

"I suffer it to be fixed by others," replied Frederica drily; "and it is fortunate for me that they have not speculated more deeply on my behalf."

Lord Calder, apprehensive that the pertinacity of this intrusive counsellor might eventually discourage Frederica from venturing further into his toils, now judged it necessary to divert the channel of their conversation to some more auspicious theme; and such was his dexterity in the art of familiar eloquence, that he succeeded without much difficulty in arresting the attention of both, by engaging them in one of those gay and graceful arguments in which the nothingness of society may be enveloped by an original thinker and fearless talker. He advanced paradoxes to give them an opportunity of being refuted by the rational Vardington;—he professed subtleties of sentiment to delude Frederica into the absorbing task of investigation;—and by the time they had refined upon a few of these artificial theories, and confuted a few of his lordship's plausible casuistries, the crowd at the card-table broke into a degree of vociferation announcing that its mysteries and anxieties were over; while Mr. Vaux, approaching the window with his usual air of urbane egotism, observed to Lady Rawleigh that he feared the severity of fortune on the present occasion would afford her little temptation to become an *écarté*-player. "You have been in your usual luck, my dear Calder," he continued, "and Lady Rawleigh writes herself your debtor to the amount of two hundred and seventy pounds."

Notwithstanding the distemperature of heart and mind which had imparted to the whole evening a sort of visionary unreality, Frederica was startled into sobriety by this terrible sentence. She felt herself growing dizzy with the shock; and after a slight apology to Lord Calder for her remitting the payment of her debt till her return to town, hurried away to seek confirmation of the intelligence from Lady Barbara, and to escape the scrutiny of Lord Vardington.

But scarcely had she attained the Gothic door of the misapplied sanctuary, when Olivia seized her precipitately by the arm, and dragged her away to preside at a supper-table where the Rodenfels and a large party of the elect of fashion were already assembled; where the broadest bon-mots were in process of circulation with the champagne;—and where Lady Rochester's wit, exalted into its boldest key, was already eliciting the buoyant gaiety of her accustomed set. Among such persons, it may be readily supposed that the discomfiture of Lady Rawleigh was as much unnoticed as her real attractions were unfelt; yet scarcely had she been conducted to her seat by Sir Robert Morse, when she found herself assailed on every side by an excess of compliments and graciousness redoubling all former tokens of politeness. She was little aware of the true source of her increased popularity!—She was little aware that Lady Rochester, having discovered her to be capable of losing rouleau after rouleau without so much as inquiring the name of the dealer, or the nature of the opposition, began to regard her with unequivocal respect; and would have forgiven her triumph had Titania delegated some attendant fay to steal a complexion for Lady Rawleigh from the bud of a damask rose!—Countess Rodenfels gave her a general invitation to her diplomatic soirées;—Lord Wallingford begged permission to leave his name in Bruton-street;—Lady Blanche exultingly reminded her that Sir Capel Thornton's seat was not more than thirty miles distant from Rawleighford, quite within visiting distance,—and the old Duchess of Ledbury inquired with a remarkable show of courtesy after poor dear Lady Launceston's pulmonary afflictions!

Yet not even these flattering testimonials to her recent accession of merit could withdraw the remembrance of Frederica from her own mischances. Having remained totally indifferent to their progress, and untouched by the hazards of the écarté-table, she could not of course feel convicted of the humiliating vice of play in its most flagrant sense; but when, on glancing wildly round the supper-room, she perceived Lord Calder standing amid a group of fashionable roués, and recollected that *she was his debtor*—that she *owed* him a sum

which she should find it difficult to collect at a moment's warning—her heart sank beneath the gaze of familiar admiration which she detected him in the act of fixing upon herself! A sort of incomprehensible murmur seemed deepening around her; her heart was sickened almost beyond the power of controlling her vexation of spirit; and it was fortunate indeed for poor Frederica, that the Ash Bank guests did not forget its twelve miles distance from London, and were at length disposed to take their departure. She saw the last loiterer depart;—she heard the boyish tumult of Lord Putney and the Duke of Draxfield sportively disputing the possession of the only cloak left in the vestibule; and without noticing the thanks now poured upon her by Lady Olivia for her successful exertions in favour of the fête, or listening to the recapitulation of Monsieur Méringue's blunders and deficiencies, she hastened to her own room,—hurried through the garrulous attendance of Mrs. Pasley—and found refuge for her tears upon her solitary pillow!

Erring, however, as she was, Lady Rawleigh demands justice at our hands; and we feel bound to declare that, although her arithmetic was taxed in a perplexing mental calculation, and although Mr. Ruggs and his log-book were among the most horrific visions of her despair, the figures of Miss Elbany—Mameluke and the member of Martwich—formed the latest images imprinted on her mind as the morning sunshine glowed upon her first sleep.

Much has been said, and much indited, concerning the retributions inflicted by Providence on the réveil of the drunkard—concerning his headaches, and dizzy distemperature. But in truth there is no act of immoral excess which is not followed by a sensation of physical pain as its attendant shadow.

The dark and shuddering chill,  
Which follows fast the deeds of ill,

is by no means confined to the bosoms of the intemperate; and is only especially attached to the morrow's waking of the ultra-social, because inebriation is a vice incapable of concealment. Not Lord Launceston after the Squire Westernisms of a Warwickshire hunting dinner—not Sir Brooke after his fathomless bowl of Martwich punch,—was ever excruciated by so oppressive a headache as poor Frederica, while she wandered among the rustic trellices of Ash Bank on the following morning. Her Thursday sufferings during Laura Mapleberry's attack upon Rawleighford, were as nothing by comparison; and could Lady Launceston have caught a glimpse of her pale and haggard countenance, she

might for once have reasonably flattered herself with the prospect of nursing her daughter through a long and dangerous illness.

While Lady Olivia was busy with her head gardener in all the reversionary distresses of inspecting her trampled parterres, rifled exotics, and plundered conservatories,—and in receiving from her butler the cellar-book with its dozens of dozens of dozens extracted for the use of Monsieur Méringue and his myrmidons,—Lady Rawleigh stole away unnoticed into those lonely shrubberies so recently invaded by folly, flirtation, and frippery, and now restored to their ordinary grassy tranquillity. The birds were singing around her; the wild flowers still sparkling with dew; and in an accession of rural sensibility, she pressed her hands upon her bosom, and inveighed against her own weakness, in having quitted the rival solitudes of Rawleighford with all their pure and glorious charms, and unalloyed happiness of domestic life, to plunge into the toil and tumult of fashionable society, and encounter all the fretful irritations of the great world.

“I cared not for them—they cared not for *me*!” she exclaimed, as her restless footsteps wandered onwards. “I might have led a useful and happy life in Warwickshire;—and now it is too late! Were I to return home even this day, I should bear with me the shame of having been beguiled into unpardonable and sinful prodigality; and the sorrow of knowing that *his* heart has been profaned by devotion to another! It will not last—I know it will not and cannot last;—unlawful attachments are ever of short duration!—But its momentary existence has destroyed all the charm, all the confidence of our union; and another and another will succeed to this first dereliction,—till I shall at length become indifferent to *his* indifference, and learn to despise or to detest my husband!”

And as she announced to herself this prospect of mutual indifference, poor Frederica threw herself down on a seat that very opportunely presented itself, and burst into an agony of tears. But floods of tears, whether originating in jealousy or remorse, cannot last for ever even when flowing from the eyes of the most heroic heroine; and when the concluding drops glistened on her silken lashes, she found her looks resting upon the self-same velvet pastures and shelving coppices which they had contemplated in company with Lord Calder on the preceding day; a circumstance which naturally brought to her recollection the ill-concealed idolatry of which she had been the object. Had she been happy,—at peace with herself, her husband, and the world,—Frederica’s heart was too deeply imbued with right feelings and virtuous prin-

ciples, not to have detected and recoiled with disgust from the truth. But a thousand morbid emotions now affected her bosom.—She was miserable,—she was desperate, and she was injured!—and it is surprising with what blind predilection we turn in our sense of oppression and abandonment, to those who speak us fairest and enter most vehemently into our wrongs. To become fully conscious of the charm that lies in the soothing tones of affection and sympathy, it needs to have lost two hundred and seventy sovereigns at écarté; and to have been supplanted in the heart we believed exclusively our own by the person we most despise in the creation!

Frederica, while she pondered over the daring defiance of her wishes with which Sir Brooke absented himself from Lady Olivia's fête could not but remember that Lord Calder had eagerly plunged into a society and a species of diversion necessarily odious to his fastidious taste, in order to approach her side; that notwithstanding the artful attacks made on his notice by the beautiful Lady Blanche, and the flippant Mrs. Erskyne, he had never for a moment withdrawn himself from the task of cheering *her* depression, and animating the uneventful monotony of *her* morning. She recollected his almost paternal vigilance over her when she was molested by the bolder homage of Lord Putney, the Duke of Draxfield, or Sir Robert Morse; she recollected the feeling and gentle persuasiveness of voice and manner which had tempered his admonitions during their tête-à-tête on that very seat; and ended by quite forgiving him for having become her creditor, when she remembered that the act was involuntary on his part,—arranged without his concurrence by the Dynleys and the écarté players,—and claiming as small a share in his notice as her own. One point however was urgent; that she must accelerate her departure for town, in order to make immediate arrangements for the payment of her debt; and she resolved in defiance of her aching head and heart, her empty purse and overcharged feelings, to escape at once the society of Sir Brooke and the necessity for a visit to Charles-street, by taking refuge at Almack's. She had heard Lady Margaret Fieldham canvassing for a chaperon in the ball-room the night before; and determined to offer her services so as to anticipate all remonstrances on the part of her husband.

Refreshed by these contemplations, Lady Rawleigh now returned to the house with a countenance very little more disturbed than that with which her fussy aunt emerged from her private audience with the French cook, and the English pantler. Lady Olivia had engaged to accompany her back

to London in what is termed the "cool of the evening;" but as one ladyship was eager to escape the spectacle of the wreck of property consequent on the fête, and the other to fly to the spectacle of the wreck of property and happiness by which she was menaced, they became unanimous in an opinion that the "cool of the evening" is best represented by a sultry, dusty, breathless afternoon in June, enjoyed on the high road among butter-carts and Epping stages. While Mrs. Pasley, ensconced in the rumble with Lady Olivia's confidential gentleman, made war against the Essex dust and sunshine, with a green veil and a bunch of fading lilacs in her hand, and against the capriciousness of her mistress by a murmuring series of accusations and complaints, Frederica was reclining in one corner of the carriage and her aunt in the other;—the one sorrowful,—the other sulky.

We are indebted to Dr. Johnson for a confirmation of our private opinion, that one of the pleasantest of sensual pleasures is to be whirled along a level road in an easy vehicle. "Post-chaise" is the specification of the philosopher of Bolt-court; but the process of colloquial abuse having now restricted that once honourable appellation to the rattling and jarring vehicles distributed gratis by post-masters to unprovided travellers, we are unwilling to appropriate Frederica's equipage by the term. But designated by whatever name, it is certain that it had not progressed many miles over the plane surface of the county of Essex, before the ill-humour and depression of its several fair inhabitants became considerably amended;—it was evident that Lady Olivia was already revolving in her mind the glorious verdict her breakfast was about to receive from society and the newspapers, as some sort of balance to its concomitant disasters.

"I cannot recollect anything like a failure in the arrangements of the day," said her ladyship, as these cheering anticipations dawned upon her mind. "All the fine and super-fine people appeared quite satisfied, and stayed till the last; and the beauties had put on their best looks to do us honour. I never saw Lady Wandesford look so handsome,—she is one of the few matrons who can bear daylight; and Mrs. Offley gave us the *étrennes* of Herbault's best Longchamps specimen. Lady Rochester, little Dynley, the Rodenfels, and Lady Blanche, were perfectly contented because they had all their old set about them;—Lady Lawford and Lady Huntingfield, because they had a new one;—and the young Duchess of Axeter assured me it was the only time she has danced this season. That little silly friend of yours, Mrs. Erskyne, was of great use to me,—her flirting and folly make her very popular;—and we never should have got up a ma-

zurka but for her scolding the Duke of Draxfield and coaxing Lord Putney."

"It all went off very well;—it was a charming breakfast!" said Frederica, with a desponding sigh.

"Binwell assures me that the Burgundy was sour, that out of the four dozen opened two were thrown away;—and Meringue complained very much of the champagne, and said it poisoned his *plats*; but somehow or other people got through both. Lord Calder said something very civil about the excellence of the pines;—he never tastes them, you know, but is an unequalled judge of the bouquet,—and can distinguish whether a new Providence or a Catalonian is cut in the adjoining room."

"I heard Lord Vardington making a very scientific and laudatory speech on the subject."

"Lord who, my dear?"

"Lord Vardington,—the new man."

"I wonder which of my acquaintance took the liberty of bringing him; for he certainly never was presented to me, and received no regular card."

"Oh! people do those things now with very little compunction."

"Not well-bred people;—particularly when there is a sitting down dinner or supper."

"The Duke of Draxfield brought his brother, Lord Albert; and Lady Caroline Covey favoured us with two daughters and a niece more than were specified on her card of invitation."

"Dukes with a hundred thousand a-year are privileged to be impertinent; and Lady Caroline is my second cousin. I dare say, by-the-bye, it was your new ally, Lady Rochester, who brought this uninvited man;—I recollect there was some sort of scandal about them some five-and-twenty-years ago."

"Then it must have occurred when his lordship was at Eton; for he cannot be more than forty now. But are you sure, my dear aunt, that any liaison ever existed between them?—for I once saw them together at Lawrence's gallery, and they did not seem to have any previous acquaintance."

"Confirmation strong!—a discarded lover must necessarily be as a stranger or as an enemy. But, my dear Frederica, I fancy that notwithstanding the praises you have bestowed on my fête and the exertions by which you contributed to its excellence, *you* at least have no reason to remember it with satisfaction."

"Nay!" replied Lady Rawleigh, blushing in the belief

that the jealous motive of her depression was known to her aunt; "it would have happened on some other occasion, if not on this. Indeed on the whole I am thankful that my eyes have been opened."

"Pardon me, my dear,—I have a better opinion of your discretion!—I am satisfied the misfortune originated solely in my persuasions and in your desire to oblige me."

Frederica now perceived that Lady Olivia alluded to the *écarté-table*.

"And as I should be very sorry," continued her ladyship, with a grim smile, "that you had reason to connect any unpleasant reminiscences with Ash Bank, you must do me the favour to accept this fifty pound note;—and you can devote the surplus to the setting of the Roman mosaics."

*The surplus!*—Poor Lady Olivia!—In the simplicity of her frugal heart, she conceived it just possible that her niece might have been decoyed into playing five shilling points, and into a loss of some fifteen or twenty pounds; and fancied herself to be performing an act of signal munificence. It was in vain that Lady Rawleigh blushing declined the gift; the old lady's heart and purse were both open on the occasion,—and she really rejoiced in being able to remove the uneasiness which she plainly perceived to be hanging over the spirits of her niece.

"And who informed you of my ill luck, my dear aunt?" inquired Frederica. "I did not notice you in the card-room."

"No, my dear!—I was too busy with Méringue's people to come and see how you were going on; and with all my watchfulness I could not manage to prevent them breaking off the head of Britannia in the biscuit group of my plateau, besides the arms of two shepherdesses."

"I conclude then, that Lady Barbara complained of sharing my misfortunes?"

"No! it was Mr. Waddlestone, who laughingly advised me to accelerate the announcement of supper, unless I wished Lady Rawleigh to be pillaged of her last guinea by Rodenfels and Co."

"Mr. Waddlestone?—how very officious! I was not aware that any of those odious people were present. I thought I heard something of Miss W. being confined with a bad cold."—

"Certainly,—and I fancy Launceston only remained in town on pretext of nursing the fair Leonora, for her father did not seem the least uneasy; and, to own the truth, I thought myself fortunate to get rid of the family at so cheap a rate. He came with the Prince de Guéméné."

"Did he?" said Frederica, secretly reverting to the true motive of her brother's ungracious absence from Ash Bank,—  
"I did not even perceive the Guéménées;—in such a crowd one misses half one's friends."

"They went away early, to dine in town," said Lady Olivia, and added something further on the subject which was wholly lost to Lady Rawleigh; for her thoughts were now riveted on Lord Launceston's folly, and on her husband's treachery.—She had not even a name to qualify the guilt of Miss Elbany!

## CHAPTER IV.

Let the strict tale of graver mortals be  
 A long, exact, and serious comedy;  
 In every scene some moral let it teach,  
 And, if it can, at once both please and preach.  
 Let *mine* an innocent gay farce appear.—POPE'S EPISTLES.

LADY RAWLEIGH had been careful to time her arrival in town so that the post hour would enable her to draw upon Mr. Ruggs, to the full amount of the two hundred and twenty pounds still remaining in his hands as the residue of her three-quarters' pin money; a sum which, with the note so kindly and opportunely presented to her by Lady Olivia, would discharge her debt of honour to Lord Calder. On examining her treasury, she found some forty or fifty pounds untouched of Lady Launceston's original benefaction; which she conceived would supply her incidental expenses till the 9th of August,—the anniversary of her wedding-day,—renewed her claims upon the Rawleighford agent, for the concluding hundred of the year;—a sum appropriated to pay the statuary in Portland-road, and "put money in her purse."

But then the opera-box,—the milliner's account,—the Roman mosaics,—the Hampton expedition?—Alas! poor Frederica!—a sensation of loathing and terror pervaded her bosom as she pondered over these things; and it afforded at least a respite to her agonies when she remembered having heard Christmas assigned as the season of universal acquittal of similar obligations. With a singular but pardonable abuse of arithmetic, her inexperience prompted a computation that the pin money of another half-year would set her free from all pecuniary embarrassment!—

Her spirits were however sufficiently fluttered by this opening of the budget, to lead her to rejoice in the information imparted by Martin, that Sir Brooke did not dine at home. Having very little anticipated Frederica's return on the very day succeeding her festal fatigues, and being perfectly contented that she should remain at Ash Bank, out of the way of Lady Rochester and her set and under the duennaship of a gryphon of such unapproachable vigilance as Lady Olivia,—he was indulging in the Wednesday-delights of a senatorial half-holiday, at the sober mansion of

a Derenzy cousin, gloomily domesticated in Argyll-street. This collateral branch of his kindred having inferred that his alliance with the fashionable Miss Rawdon must necessarily render him a very fine gentleman, and his seat in parliament a very wise one, he found himself regarded with as much deference by the tribe of common-place mediocrats by which he was now surrounded, as ever waited on the stately presence of Lord Calder, in the coteries of Calder House!

Meanwhile Frederica, after a few three-cornered billets of explanation with Lady Huntingfield and Lady Margaret Fieldham on her project of chaperonship, which was joyously accepted on the part of the latter, and after a most elaborate plan de campagne, by which it was arranged that Lady Rawleigh's carriage should convey her protégée from Lady Salisbury's party to Bruton-street, about eleven of the clock, she threw herself down for an hour's repose previous to the business of the toilet. But after having been roused from her restless dreams by Mrs. Pasley's summons long before she felt sufficiently refreshed to encounter the labours of the evening, and just as in full array, in all her brilliancy of garlands and diamonds,—she stood watching in the drawing-room to receive her bouquet fan and gloves at the moment of departure, a heavy unscientific knock invaded the street door—(*a coup de maitre* very different from the expected announcement of Lady Margaret and the carriage)—and the step of Sir Brooke Rawleigh was heard upon the stairs!

Frederica had time to assume a degree of dignified majesty becoming the occasion, and calculated to strike dismay into the soul of the delinquent; and so handsome did she look in this attitude of regal disdain, that nothing could be more natural than the start and pause of delighted surprise which for a moment detained the astonished baronet on the threshold of the apartment.

"My dearest Frederica!" he exclaimed, advancing with affectionate warmth towards her; "I had not the slightest expectation of your return. What brought you to town in so great a hurry,—and where *are* you going in all that splendour?"

"You forget that it is Wednesday," replied Lady Rawleigh, coldly withdrawing the hand she had been compelled to extend towards him in order to escape a more tender greeting;—"a circumstance which will as naturally account for my haste to leave Ash Bank, as for my dress.—I am going to Almack's."

"Almack's!" cried the provoked husband,—who was very little accustomed to be welcomed in this harsh and contemptuous manner; and whose feelings were irritated by having

imbibed a superabundance of fiery wine, in a feverish dining-room stuffed beyond its dimensions by a set of ill-bred men, stuffed beyond *their* capacity with politics;—"Almack's!—can you not remain at home for one evening?"—and suddenly recollecting the invitations he had heard petitioned by Mrs. William Erskyne for Lord Calder and his sister, he naturally connected Lady Rawleigh's return and eagerness for fresh gaieties, with an appointment made to that effect at the Ash Bank breakfast; and threw himself sulkily on the sofa, while Frederica coolly replied that she found no inducement to pass the evening in Bruton-street in a solitary and deserted house.

"Could I have anticipated your haste to return to town," replied the baronet, growing still more angry, "I should not have accepted Mr. Derenzy's invitation. But since the house is no longer either solitary or deserted, perhaps you will oblige me by giving up this one ball in my favour;—unless indeed you have any *very* particular engagement to demand your presence there."

"I *have* a very particular engagement," said Lady Rawleigh, adjusting her bouquet with the most provoking sang froid. And Sir Brooke, who had seen her on more than one occasion go through the trying ordeal of giving up a party when fully equipped in all the pride of beauty and finery, in order to gratify his whim for staying at home,—was as satisfied of the *particularity* of the present case as her utmost desire of vengeance could suggest. Between the irritations of sour claret and jealousy of Lord Calder, he was trembling on the very verge of domestic tyranny; and had just nerved himself to declare that he *insisted* on the resignation of the ball, when a thundering knock and a carriage stopping at the door, arrested the iniquitous sentence on his lips.

"Good night!" said Lady Rawleigh, instantly seizing her fan and gloves. "It is Lady Margaret Fieldham, whom I have promised to chaperone;" and without giving him time to extricate himself from his sullen recumbency on the sofa, in order to see her properly shawled and escorted, she bounded down stairs, and in a moment he heard the departing wheels of the chariot.

"And such are the blessings of matrimony!" soliloquized the injured husband as he gazed round the lonely chamber, which for two days past had assumed a melancholy disarray in consequence of the absence of its lovely mistress; and which now derived a sort of mysterious gloom, from the single dressing-room taper, brought down by Frederica, and left burning on a distant table. "These are the joys of a London life!" And rising from the sofa, he began to pace the room with a degree of perturbation almost rivalling that of the fatal

Hampton morning, so connected with his imputed turpitude in the mind of his wife. But on this occasion it was too late to fly to Charles-street for counsel or solace; and he had begun to mutter a few unhandsome expressions touching Lady Launceston's dowager hours, and valetudinarian habits, when it suddenly occurred to him to order a hackney-coach and proceed to the scene of mischief; in order to investigate the plots of Lady Rawleigh, or at least repress them by his presence. He was so long in finding his ticket among the confused mass of invitations and visiting cards collected during Frederica's absence, that the plebeian vehicle to which he had condemned himself, arrived at the door before he had time by a glance at the looking-glass to ascertain that a disordered toilet,—and a heated, and family-dinnerish visage,—are by no means graceful preparatives for a ball-room so ostensibly illuminated as that of Willis; and Sir Brooke finally took his departure with a flaccid cravat, a dishevelled head, and a resentful heart, such as nothing but a cross husband ever yet dreamed of introducing into that temple of the graces.

Frederica, in the interim, delighted to have got over her first interview with the delinquent with a display of such dignified calmness, and with an avoidance of all allusion to Charles-street or Miss Elbany, such as must have necessitated the further crime of hypocrisy on his part, gradually recovered her spirits in the forced duty of appearing courteous to Lady Huntingfield's daughter;—and by the time she had made the tour of the ball-room with Lady Margaret on her arm, and received her usual tribute of flattery and admiration, she contrived to forget Bruton-street and its tribulations. She found that for her own views and purposes, she could not be provided with a more satisfactory protégée than the one which had fallen to her share. There were no impatient lordlings eager to tear her companion from her side, as in the instance of Louisa Erskyne; no bevy of adorateurs to surround them with importunate homage.—Lady Margaret Fieldham had reached that critical point of dowager girlhood, which made it advisable to her parents to omit the date of her birth from their page in the peerage, and rendered current her partnership account little better than a certificate of bankruptcy. In the course of the season she thought herself fortunate in being occasionally led to the lists, by some detrimental or disreputable who found it convenient to bag her father's pheasants in October, and unbag his foxes in December; or by some small dandy about town,—some poor honourable,—some noble secretary's secretary,—who managed to eke out his three hundred and sixty-five eleemosy-

nary dinners, by frequent invitations to the well-spread board of Lord Huntingfield.

But as neither of her parents were on the spot to book a similar instance of polite gratitude for favours past or in prospect, poor Lady Margaret had very little chance on the present occasion of deserting her chaperon's side. She received languid bows, or listless smiles of recognition from half the men of fashion about town: but it was evident that those of the number who sought partners among the single of the female community, preferred them of some sixteen or eighteen years less experience in the world and its ways, than the Lady Margaret Fieldham. It was not a little amusing to Frederica to observe how laboriously the elderly young lady strove to impress upon her mind her own abhorrence of dancing in general, and of fatigue on this oppressive night in particular; and how completely she over-acted all her usual grimaces of affectation,—of susceptible nerves,—tender fragility of frame,—and tremulous delicacy. “It killed her to walk about,—it suffocated her to sit still;—in one room there was a most oppressive crowd,—in the other a paralyzing draught of air.” All which murmurs, being interpreted, simply meant that poor Lady Margaret was in agonies for want of a partner!

There was one branch of the business, however, which gratified even more than it diverted her. Lord Calder, who entertained a holy horror of affected women, and who had found himself at one period of his career a very ostensible mark for Lady Margaret Fieldham's matrimonial manoeuvres, no sooner noticed the companion with which Lady Rawleigh had fortified herself, than he went his way to the opposite side of the room; and devoted himself to a tête-à-tête with Lady Blanche Thornton *en attendant mieux*; that is,—*en attendant* that some raw guardsman should provide himself with the hand of Lord Huntingfield's eager daughter. It is true he turned many a wistful glance of inquiry towards her, whenever some fashionable flirt anchored his cane for a minute beside the beautiful Frederica; and even seriously thought him of imploring his *double*, Mr. Vaux, to take off for the charitable space of a single quadrille, that galvanized mummy who stood mincing and simpering beside her. But Lord Calder kept an accurate thermometer of the selfishness of his friends; and was cautious not to demand a sacrifice beyond the reach of their magnanimity. At length, however, unable longer to refuse himself a share of those gentle smiles which he saw dispensed by Lady Rawleigh in return for the deference and eager courtesies lavished on her by the leading men of the beau-monde, he contrived to reach one of his

nephews;—a stripling reluctantly devoted to the public service of sketching monkeys on the blotting-paper of a treasury minute-book,—and very obsequiously devoted to the will and opinions of his very exclusive and very boroughiferous uncle.

"My dear Alfred," whispered Lord Calder, with an air of confidential mystery, "I am surprised to see you idling about while Lady Margaret Fieldham has ~~a~~ partner. Surely I must have already pointed out to you the eligibility of being on good terms with that family?—Her elder brother, Lord Manningtree, has been much talked of lately for the Exchequer, and is one of the most prominent men of the present party."

"I really did not observe,—I positively was not aware,—I trust you will excuse my inattention;" faltered the captured Mr. Rockingham, who had been loitering in the vicinity of Mrs. William Erskyne,—with a hope of being eventually permitted to relieve Lord Putney's guard, or accepted as pissaller to escort that very capricious little personage into the tea-room. And while his crafty uncle leisurely followed his line of march to profit by the *ruse de guerre*, poor Alfred made his doleful way through groups of the youngest and loveliest women in England, to offer his homage to a superannuated damsel who had dawned upon a county hall or two, before his own Honourable birth was announced in the Morning Post. He was just within sight and sound of Lady Margaret's pathetic vocables, when his co-mate and brother in official dignity, Lord George Madrigal, seized him by the arm; and while Lord Calder secretly wished that this small minnow of Helicon were gliding through its favourite shallows of the Pierian spring, the lyrist was heard to enter into a project of sublunary diversion, which seemed to allure the wishes of Mr. Rockingham far more than the antiquated charms of Lord Manningtree's sister.

"My dear fellow, I have been looking for you in every quarter of the woom. I followed Lady Blanche's boatwithe round the waltzerth, fanthyng you muht be cawying it; and I am juht come fwom theartching Mrs. Erthkyne's pocketh. Where are you going in thuth a huwy?"

"To a better place I trust!—but what have you to say to me of such moment?"

"I want you to be of a water-pawty to Wickmond the day after to-mowow. An ecthellent thet—the Dynleyth, Erthkynth, Actheterth, Putney, Dwacthfield, Wythe, Launthton, and half a dothen otherth; the guardth band,—Gunter,—and a wuwal spot in the park thelected by mythelf. Think what an aggwagation of attwactionth!"

"And at what rate of ruin?—a younger brother's quarterly allowance?"

"Oh! no—a twifle—a twifle—two or thwée thoveweighn at the eccthwemity."

"I will think of it, and let you know in the morning," said the perplexed Alfred; suspecting that his uncle might be within hearing, and prepared to lecture him on a projected indulgence so much at war with his official duties. But Lord Calder's ears were far otherwise engrossed. From his station behind these two contemned and importunate boys, he could just discern the mild radiance of Frederica's eyes as they rested on the countenance of some invisible personage, and the silvery tones of her voice breathing words of the kindest gentleness to the same concealed rival; and had it not pleased Lord George to take flight at that critical moment towards the seat of the blue and beautiful Lady Wandesford, whom he honoured with a sort of literary flirtation—a Laura Matilda and Della Crusca species of platonic attachment—his patience would have been utterly exhausted. But he had now the satisfaction of seeing his nephew's perumed curls inclined towards Lady Margaret Fieldham, and of observing an acceleration of airs and attitudes on her part, such as spoke compliance with the request. Judging it time, therefore, to put forward his own claims, he advanced towards Lady Rawleigh just as her protégée faltered forth, "I had positively determined not to dance this evening; but merely as a relief to my chaperon from the severity of her duties,—I think, Mr. Rockingham, I may—venture—on *half* a waltz."

Poor Alfred!—it had been his intention to demand a quadrille from so uninviting a partner; but Lady Margaret had now quitted Frederica's arm, and fastened herself to his own with the tenacity of a limpit; leaving to Lord Calder ample space and verge enough to assure himself that the individual favoured by Lady Rawleigh's smiles and Lady Rawleigh's gracious discourse, was nothing more alarming to his self-love than the fair girl whom he had seen at the drawing-room in all the odium of consanguinity with the Cantelupe melon.

"Will you allow me to offer you my arm," said he, advancing towards them, "while Lady Margaret leaves you?" and he suited the action to the word, with very little doubt that his company would be gladly accepted.

"Thank you," said Frederica, with a smile of most hypocritical courtesy, dreading a *tête-à-tête* under their present disagreeable reciprocation of debtor and creditor, "but I promised the Duke of Draxfield to dance with him, should Lady Margaret change her mind. Miss Waddlestone is engaged to waltz with the Comte de Molleville, and will

inform the Duke that I am now ready to fulfil my engagement."

Lord Calder's heart swelled rebelliously at the idea of Lady Rawleigh's condescending to remind a young puppy such as Draxfield of his engagements, and still more at the recollection of the bootless pains he had taken to secure the happiness of another; particularly when the count on whose arm Leonora was leaning hastened towards his grace,—who was at Frederica's side in a moment, hatless, caneless, breathless, and smiling his triumphant self-gratulation at this unexpected summons.

"At least," said Lord Calder, anxious in spite of his pique to retain some pledge for her return on the conclusion of the dance, "at least permit me the honour of holding your scarf and fan, while you are more agreeably engaged." And in another minute he had the satisfaction of seeing Lady Rawleigh's graceful figure whirling round the room as if in mockery of his defeated machinations!

It is allowed by all men endowed with that nervous susceptibility of body and soul which the ill-natured appropriate with the name of jealousy, that nothing can be more trying to a husband afflicted with this distemperature than to see the idol of his bosom dance, for the first time after her marriage, with another man. It usually occurs that the lady's latest exhibition of a similar kind, was made in conjunction with the fortunate suitor who has now the supreme glory of calling her his own;—and being connected in his mind with that anti-nuptial courtship which forms the concluding stanza of the poetry of human life, the innovation appears an encroachment on his peculiar privileges. But what must be such a trial of sensibility when the dance is a waltz,—the loving lord an Othello such as Sir Brooke Rawleigh,—and the lucky partner a young gentleman of such unmatched attractions as the Duke of Draxfield?—

Yet such was the malice of the fates, that precisely this combination of untoward events awaited the honourable member for Martwich when, having diligently searched every occult corner of the ball-room as the probable refuge of her ladyship and Lord Calder, he suddenly caught a glimpse of her lovely form flying through the maze of waltzers on Draxfield's arm in the centre of a ring of admiring spectators!—When Collinet swelled his concluding minim,—when Musard's chin rested on his violin and his keynote,—and Frederica found her steps suddenly arrested in the circle by the firm support of her partner,—she had the satisfaction of finding herself standing next to her husband,—his countenance lowering with all the tornadoes and hurricanes of conjugal indignation!

## CHAPTER V.

Am I the lord of such a lady?

TAMING OF THE SHREW.

THE start with which Frederica recognized this very unexpected proximity, was interpreted by Sir Brooke into the impulse of a guilty conscience; and naturally anticipating some show of penitence or humility in her demeanour towards an injured husband, he was not a little surprised to find his wife negligently decline the arm he sternly tendered to her support, and coolly announce that "she must go in search of Lord Calder, who was taking care of her scarf!"

What secret opinion poor Rawleigh might form at that moment concerning the audacity of fashionable sin and sinners, it would be perplexing to define;—but the countenance with which, at some little distance, he followed the Duke of Draxfield and his partner towards the other end of the room, was sufficiently rueful to attract the friendly notice of Mr. Dynley.

"Ha! Rawleigh, my dear fellow!" he exclaimed, laying a detaining hand upon his arm, "I am delighted to see that you have been as much gratified as myself by the spectacle of Lady Rawleigh's inimitable waltzing. I thought it perfect last night at Ash Bank,—but positively her accomplishments rise, like Garrick's acting, to the level of the audience. By the way, you did not patronize Lady Olivia's syllabub-and-green-geese festivities? I was afraid you were growing too fashionable to be seen with your wife; and that I, and Thornton, and Wandesford, should be left for the remainder of the season to the prominent odium of conjugal politeness."

"I had business in town; and had no idea the thing would last till so late an hour."

"Nor would it,—for we had all ordered our carriages at seven o'clock,—but Lady Rawleigh put so much life and spirit into the affair, that there was no getting away. Assisted by Morse, she waltzed the whole ball-room into sensibility and animation; and aided by Lord Calder, doubled the stake at the écarté-table. Lady Barbara was quite amused by the novice-like zeal of her friend's speculations."

"I trust they may never mend in experience; I would as soon be married to a hyena as to a gambling wife."

"Thank you for the inference!—But I find we all grow reconciled to the vices of our chère moitié. Bab's passion for écarté appears to me an advantageous exchange for the levity of many of her female friends; and just look at Thornton yonder!—who seems quite as much pleased that Lady Blanche should leave him to his political reveries, and sit whispering under the orchestra with the Prince de Guéménée. You see we are all three satisfied;—you with a waltzing,—he with a flirting,—I with a card-playing wife!"

Sir Brooke certainly did not exhibit on his countenance much evidence of the satisfaction announced by his companion; but he judged it unnecessary to favour a fashionable echo, such as Dynley, with a profession of faith respecting his conjugal theories and practices. Gladly would he have escaped all further ordeal on the subject by pursuing the recreant Frederica to the arms of Lord Calder; but Dynley was not to be shaken off; and now summoned to his aid a tall scraggy-looking man standing near them, whose restless twinkling gray eyes seemed to wander on a voyage of discovery towards all points of the room at once. Elevated above the crowd, like the Eddystone light-house, he uplifted his gaunt ungainly figure in defiance of the contending tide.

"Indice! my worthy friend," cried Dynley, "you who, like Andes,

Look from your throne of clouds o'er half the world,

pritheer reassure poor Rawleigh respecting his lady's safety. He is struggling to make his way towards her, in the dread that she may be shipwrecked against some fat dowager for want of his pilotage;—so 'prate of her whereabouts' like a good Christian as you are; and procure me the pleasure of his company five minutes longer."

Sir Brooke bowed stiffly to the grim apparition before him, —with whom, as a reputed jackal to the clubs, and court-circular to the dowagers, he made it a point of conscience to maintain a refrigerating distance; but Indice had at all times too much to say to be repulsed by the coldness of an auditor, and now fixed his glass inquiringly to his eye, with an officious determination to supply all and more than all the intelligence required.

"Lady Rawleigh, Dynley!—did you say? Lady Rawleigh—let me see—let me see!—I noticed her just now in the tea-room with Sir Robert Morse.—No! by the way,—that was an hour ago;—she left us on Lord Calder's arm to go in search of the Duke of Draxfield; and I observed her afterwards to a very pretty girl, whom Putney informed

me was daughter to that tallow-chandler introduced last night by her ladyship to the écarté table at Ash Bank."

"But cannot you find her out for us *now*?" persisted Dynley. "Steer by Lord Calder, and I dare say Lady Rawleigh will not be far off."

"You deserve to be an elder brother of the Trinity House, or a director of the nautical almanack," sneered Mr. Indice. "Calder and her ladyship are retreating arm-in-arm from one of the prolix narratives of Lady Caroline Covey. The dismay depicted in their faces I can well understand,—having been twice attacked myself this evening by that most inveterate of Partlets; once with the history of Sir Nigel's rheumatism, who is lying in bed after a dose of Dover's powders;—and once with a piece of steward's-room scandal about Wandesford and—"

"Well—well—never mind Lady Caroline's *jobotage*;—she takes care we shall none of us escape. But tell me, Indice, who do you mean by the tallow-chandler at Ash Bank?—I was in the écarté room all the evening; and I saw no person introduced to the table by Lady Rawleigh. On the contrary she was sitting all the time in a window-seat with Calder, playing blind stakes."

"I mean a good-looking fellow with dark hair, who is always about with the Guéménées and Axeters. He has a very pretty little snow-drop of a daughter,—a prodigious heiress, who they say is engaged to Launceston."

"You mean Mr. Waddlestone!" said Sir Brooke calmly, not the least awed by the difficulty of pronouncing so plebeian a name. "A man of very enlightened mind, I understand, and polished manners; who is much courted in the best society although I have not at present the honour of his acquaintance. I wonder, Dynley, that *you* did not recognize him at the Ash Bank,—for I think you told me you had been in the habit of dining at his table, in Italy, three times a week?"

"Did I?—I make it a rule to forget where I dine; unless the chef or the cellar demand the distinction of a red cross in my private pocket-book."

"Besides," added Mr. Indice, significantly, "now that Dynley is so fortunate as to write himself a married man, heiress-hunting has become a very superfluous exercise. It is quite as convenient to him *now* to eat his cutlets at Calder House, as at any tallow-chandler's in the land. Vaux declares that you have a catalogue raisonné of the houses belonging to real Amphytrions,—that he could swear to the merits of any man's *menu* by your manner of returning his

bow;—and that you dropped Lord Wroxworth's acquaintance, the very season he dropped his French cook."

"What else was there to recommend his dull, dry, rational *coterie*!" exclaimed Dynley, without attempting to deny the charge. "One could swallow even Lady Wroxworth's sentimentousness in company with Vatel's filets; but by Jove, when I attempted them with boiled cod and a saddle of mutton, I found my digestion unequal to the trial."

Just at this juncture of the dialogue, Lady Margaret Fieldham,—who by dint of some of those arts peculiarly known to superannuated beauties, had been contriving to fasten herself upon young Rockingham for the space of a waltz and a quadrille by leading him up and down the room in pretended quest of her chaperon,—much after the bewildering fashion of *Hermina* and *Helena* in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*,—unfortunately came in such immediate contact with her partner's husband, that there was no further excuse for trespassing on the patience of the unhappy *Alfred*.

"Sir Brooke!" she exclaimed, with a very picturesque pause of amazement, "do I absolutely behold you here, in the lively possession of your faculties, three hours after Lady Rawleigh's assurance that you were in bed and fast asleep?"

"Asleep—but not in bed," muttered Dynley; while Rawleigh, who at all times detested Lady Margaret's grimaces, and had not yet lost the awkward consciousness of her unlucky *entrée* in Charles-street, made as brief a reply as possible, in the hope that she would pass on and pursue elsewhere her flirtation with the unhappy boy she had inveigled into partnership. But this was impossible. For full twenty minutes past she had been so eloquent in the expression of her anxiety to find her chaperon, that there no longer remained the least excuse for persecuting Mr. Rockingham.

"Can you tell me," she cried, again addressing Sir Brooke, "in what mysterious corner Lady Rawleigh has hidden herself?—We have had a long and hopeless chase after her; and no one can give us any tidings of her retreat. But I need not detain you any longer in the pursuit," she continued, dropping the arm of her partner, which was already stiffened by her obstinate adhesion, "for I have no doubt Sir Brooke will be kind enough to take care of me, till we discover the lost treasure."

The irritated baronet having reluctantly accepted the charge thus imposed; and being extremely unwilling to prolong the responsibility of so valuable a guardianship, immediately attempted to make his way towards the spot previously pointed out by the malicious interference of Dynley and Indice; but

on reaching the sofa, the guilty parties had again disappeared ;—no traces of Lady Rawleigh were to be discovered !

"I told you so!" lisped Lady Margaret, enchanted at the prospect of a new tour of the room, which might perhaps attract another partner. "I am persuaded Lady Rawleigh is in possession of Fortunatus's invisible girdle ; for this is just the manner she has contrived to evade me the whole evening. However under *your* auspices I shall persevere."

Sir Brooke, who with all his perspicuity had not yet discovered how fluently fine ladies can fib when occasion, or even when no occasion requires, firmly believed that his wife had thrown off Lady Margaret's company on entering the room ; and had most inhumanly withdrawn her protection ever since ; while Lady Margaret, finding the opportunity inviting for the indulgence of a few interjections and superlatives, amused herself as she dragged along on his arm by expressing that she was most horribly tired,—positively expiring with fatigue. "Perhaps you will exert your influence in my favour," she murmured—fully persuaded that they should not encounter her chaperon for the next half hour, "and persuade Lady Rawleigh to allow you to inquire for the carriage?"

"Certainly—certainly."

"There is nothing I abhor so much upon earth as wearing a ball threadbare!—But really Lady Rawleigh is growing *such* a rake, that I scarcely know how we shall persuade her to tear herself away."

"Frederica seldom stays any where after two o'clock," replied her companion in the relenting veracity of his honest heart.

"Oh! my dear Sir Brooke! pray pardon me!—I positively saw her at Lady Blanche Thornton's after four."

"Then it was to oblige some troublesome young lady or other whom she had undertaken to chaperon ;—for Lady Launceston's infirm state of health would never permit her daughter to contract the habit of late hours."

"Very true!—but Miss Rawdon and Lady Rawleigh, you know, are two very different persons. The latter, being well aware of your wish that she should amuse herself in her own way, of course indulges all her natural predilections and charming vivacity. I assure you she was the admiration of the whole room last night at Ash Bank ; and I heard the Prince de Guéménée observe to Lady Blanche, how much animation Lady Rochester's set had infused into her character."

"Frederica possesses neither more nor less than the instinctive liveliness of *youth*!" observed Sir Brooke, willing to repay in kind the sarcasms of his amiable companion.

"I expect ~~she~~ will turn all our heads in Warwickshire!" continued Lady Margaret, reclining her own most lackadaisically on one shoulder. "I heard her inviting the Duke of Draxfield, and the Axeters and Wandesfords, to meet her at Leamington in the summer; and that singing man, Sir Vincent Randall,—and Mr. Vaux."

"Leamington!" involuntarily ejaculated Sir Brooke, to whom this disposal of the summer months was as new as it was repugnant.

"And I find you are to be steward of the races, and are to fill Rawleighford for the occasion, and do the honours of the county in proper style. Ah! there is Lady Rawleigh at length;—yonder!—standing in the doorway with Sir Robert Morse."

And pressing hastily towards her, they contrived to reach the spot just at the moment her ladyship, whose back was turned towards them, was in the act of receiving Lord Calder's parting bow. Finding Sir Robert Morse resolutely attach himself to her side so as to impede the possibility of confidential discourse, his lordship had wisely determined on retreat; and Sir Brooke had the satisfaction of overhearing his own beloved Frederica whisper to her friend at parting, "You will hear from me to-morrow!—unless you prefer calling in Bruton-street on the following day, when I will be prepared for your visit."

"I think you cannot doubt that I joyfully accept the alternative," replied Calder in a significant voice as he turned into the ante-room; and Frederica at the same moment perceiving her husband and Lady Margaret, exclaimed to the latter, "Ah! you are come at last;—perhaps if you have done dancing it may not be disagreeable to you to have the carriage called? I am quite ready."

No further pretext offering itself for delay, Sir Brooke had very shortly afterwards the agreeable task of escorting one sullen and one silent lady down stairs. Lady Margaret was angry with her unsuccessful evening, and the prospect of having her ball-dress crushed by the unwelcome intrusion of a third person into the chariot; and Lady Rawleigh was anticipating the embarrassing conjugal tête-à-tête which would follow their departure from Lord Huntingfield's door. But both ladies were erroneous in their calculations; Sir Brooke was in a temperament of mind and body to find the night air extremely refreshing; and having formally handed them to the carriage, he declared his intention of walking home.

Whether the exercise, the atmosphere, or the solitary self-communing with which they were associated, produced on this occasion a soothing effect upon his irritated nerves,—or whether his very just suspicion that Lady Rawleigh had

retired to the sanctuary of her dressing-room previous to his arrival, determined him to postpone the explanation which now appeared inevitable, it would be difficult to determine. But it is certain that poor Rawleigh, like other politicians, found it expedient to adjourn the debate,—or perhaps the division; and to defer till the full leisure of the following morning his remonstrances, explanations, prohibitions, and menaces.

## CHAPTER VI.

Yet if you were not so severe  
 To pass my doom before you hear,—  
 You'd find upon my just defence  
 How much you've wronged my innocence.

HUDIBRAS.

VAIN are the calculations of myopic man ! Not Seged, King of Ethiopia, in the pre-arrangement of his day of happiness, was more deceived than the member for Martwich in reckoning upon his morning of conjugal counsel. Long before his heavy eyes threw off the influence of Mr. Derenzy's heated wines, and Mr. Willis's heated rooms, and opened on the cheering prospect of a domestic squabble, Lady Rawleigh had quitted the house !—No elopement, however,—no separation,—no scandal,—but a family incident of most ordinary occurrence had summoned her to Charles-street.

It is true that when Lady Launceston's note, requesting an early visit from her dear child was placed in her hands, Frederica's affectionate heart indulged in an apprehension that the occurrence originating such a demand on her mother's part was not only of an extraordinary but of an alarming nature ; but after hurrying on her morning-dress, and hastening breakfastless and on foot to her old home, she had the satisfaction to find Lady Launceston up, well, and dressed ;—and seated before her accustomed allowance of chocolate and French rolls.

"My dear love !" she cried, as Lady Rawleigh entered the dressing-room, "how kind of you to obey my summons so early ! I had not a notion of seeing you for four hours to come ; for I heard you were not in bed till three, and Camomile assures me that ten hours rest is not more than sufficient for a delicate female. A mechanic may do with seven ;—a robust man with eight ;—a person in the decline of life with nine :—and a woman of nervous temperament with ten."

"Thank you, dearest mamma, but I assure you *my* temperament is not at all nervous ; or your mysterious note would have reduced me to hysterics. Tell me what *has* happened :—why are you anxious for an interview with me ?—I was apprehensive that you were seriously indisposed."

"No, my dear !—much as usual !—a little hurried per-

haps yesterday; for Camomile, after feeling my pulse, judged it necessary to see me in the evening; and even hinted that I might not be the worse for a grain of cynogloss in my julep before I went to bed. But with the help of his agreeable conversation I managed to get on without it; and I think I may say on the whole, that thank God I rested pretty well."

"Your looks certainly confirm your own account, but—"

"When Wrightson was putting on my cap this morning, I fancied I had got a little headache, and that it might proceed from rheumatism; for if Camomile *has* a fault, it is the habit of throwing the door wide open on its hinges when he is leaving the room;—I never ring the bell till I hear him half way down stairs, for fear they should open the street door before he has closed mine. I even called for my vinaigrette, and thought I might perhaps be laid up for the rest of the day;—*that* was just when I despatched my little note to *you*, my love. But since I have taken a few mouthfuls of chocolate—(it is the genuine *chocolat de santé* which Olivia brought over for me from Paris) I trust I have got rid of all unpleasant symptoms; and if it were not for my sad loss—"

"Loss!—what—who—"

"My dear Frederica, I begin to doubt whether you have breakfasted!—you look quite pale and fagged. Do, my love, let Wrightson bring another cup and saucer, and try a little of Olivia's chocolate; it will do you good."

"Pray set my mind at ease! I see poor Chloe is in good health!—To what loss are you alluding?"

"Lucy's society, my dear. Miss Elbany has been obliged to leave town on a visit to her friends; and I am sadly perplexed how to get on without her."

"I think I *will* have some of Lady Olivia's chocolate," said Lady Rawleigh, ringing the bell for Wrightson, and drawing a chair opposite to that of her mother. "It has an exquisite flavour of vanille. Will you spare me a roll, mamma;—I have not felt so famished this month past. Do you know it is quite delightful to come and breakfast here,—this dear room reminds me of so many pleasant days;—I declare it quite puts me in spirits."

"So it does Launceston! He often comes and breakfasts with Lucy and me; and really he is so gay and entertaining, that he makes me quite another creature for the remainder of the morning.—Ah! we shall both miss poor dear Lucy!"

"And when did Miss Elbany leave you?"

"The very day you went down to Ash Bank."

"Indeed!" said Lady Rawleigh, reddening with a sudden mistrust of the motive and destination of her journey. "And what called her away so suddenly?"

"Family business—some near relative returned from abroad, I believe. Wrightson went down with her into Sussex in a post-chaise, and returned the following day."

"And how did my brother bear his disappointment about the riding party?"

"Very ill, as you may suppose; for he had set his heart upon getting Lucy on horseback. But it all turned out for the best; for Lady Derenzy is come up from Twickenham, for a day or two, to meet her niece, Lady Sophia Lee, who is just arrived from Paris—(Colonel Rhyse's cousin, my dear)—and she wrote a very civil note, saying, that as you were absent, Lady Sophia would take it as a very particular favour to have the use of your horse; (she is a great invalid, you know, and cannot exist without air and exercise)—and so Sir Brooke and your brother, and his friend Rhyse, made it a point to escort her; and a very pleasant ride they had!"

"I rejoice to hear it!" said Frederica, with warm sincerity; delighted to be thus relieved from a painful share of her grievances. "I always liked Lady Sophia when I was a girl, before she married that old General Lee. I believe the match was entirely one of Lady Derenzy's making. She accepted the Cupid on crutches, to escape from the tediousness of that horrible coterie at Twickenham; and I suspect the inordinate fancy for equestrian exercise she has evinced ever since, arises from her eagerness to evade his society a few hours in the day."

"An ungenerous suggestion, my dear child; I assure you Camomile is far from thinking well of her. Between ourselves, he has even hinted to me that her liver is affected."

"That her liver-complaint is affected, I verily believe:—but she is a very pleasant creature, and I am glad she is come back: she will render the Derenzy family a degree more supportable."

"Ah! my dear child, do not let the society of your gay friends—of these Rochesters, and Dynleys, and Thorntons—create a distaste for that of your husband's near relatives. They all behaved very handsomely and kindly on your marriage; and when you know more of the world, Frederica, you will discover the value of being connected with persons who 'work no evil.' The Derenzys may not be very fashionable, or very entertaining; but they are your well-wishers, and are incapable of—"

"Thank you—thank you!—dearest mamma," cried Lady Rawleigh, blushing with a conviction of the excellence of her mother's counsels and of her own flippancy. "Believe me, at least, incapable of neglecting your admonitions;" and she kissed the pale delicate hand affectionately extended towards her with a glow of tenderness towards the superior

gentleness of her mother's character. If any one had at that moment whispered to her the possibility that she might learn to indulge in follies such as could give pain to Lady Launceston, she would have repelled the charge with indignation.

"Do you know, my love," resumed Lady Launceston, gratified by an *épanchement de cœur* on the part of her daughter such as she had not lately witnessed, "I am far from comfortable about Sir Brooke; he sat with me here yesterday morning for nearly two hours—finding me rather low after Lucy's departure,—and seemed so absent, and looked so hollow about the eyes, that I am beginning to fear the late hours and confinement of his parliamentary duties do not agree with him. They never did with your poor dear father; which was the reason Lord Launceston troubled himself so little about them. But well do I recollect that after the heat and worry of Lord Melville's trial, he was obliged to take the Cheltenham waters for six weeks; and had two, if not three, extra fits of the gout in the course of the year."

"But Rawleigh is not yet arrived at the season of that patriarchal malady; and I have not yet observed that he is looking ill. All men grow fidgety and restless in London; they are incessantly pining after their plantations and their harvests, and receiving tiresome Jeremiads from their country bailiffs. I really think there should be an Act of Parliament to prevent landed proprietors from straying beyond the boundaries of their own avenues."

"And their wives!—who appear just as fond of Almack's and the Opera, as if they had not an acre on earth!" said Lady Launceston, smiling. And by the way, dear Fred., Olivia will have it that Rawleigh is uneasy on your account;—that he is not half satisfied about your excessive intimacy with Mrs. Erskyne."

"Louisa is my old friend and acquaintance; and you, my dear mamma, were never displeased by our intimacy."

"In those days I was willing to attribute her giddiness to the inexperience of girlhood. I never like to judge harshly of very young people, because I am aware of the difficulty of penetrating their real character and disposition. Their apparent docility often arises from hypocrisy and the severity of those who are put in authority over them; while their seeming levity as frequently proceeds from the artless vivacity of a buoyant temperament. It is not till the ship is fairly launched, that the faults of its construction can be ascertained; it is not till the girl attains the freedom of the matron, that her true nature discovers itself."

"And what is there in that of Louisa to alarm Sir Brooke and Lady Olivia?"

"Nay! my dear child, you who live so much in her society

are better qualified to judge than I can be, who mingle so little in the world, and who turn so deaf an ear to all matters of scandal. For my own part, I am apt to conceive her frivolous and selfish; but Rawleigh considers her a coquette and a flirt; and your brother declares that she is a little gaudy fly, with a very venomous sting."

"You are come in happy time to answer for your calumnies!" cried Frederica to Lord Launceston, who now entered the room with an air of listlessness very different from the animation of his usual morning salutation to Miss Elbany. "Pray what have you to say against my friend Louisa."

"More than you will like to hear!—In the first place that she is decidedly *not* your friend;—in the next place that I heartily wish you were not hers;" replied his Lordship, sauntering to his accustomed elbow-chair.

"Take a rule to show cause," said his sister, "or prepare to be thought a libellous maligner of female fame."

"Mrs. Erskyne will leave herself but little female fame by the end of the season, if she proceeds at her present rate. I met her walking *tête-à-tête* with Putney, in one of those whispering galleries among the gravel-pits in Kensington Gardens, a few mornings ago,—at an hour when nothing but mischief causes fine ladies to be stirring."

"And what were *you* doing among the whispering galleries at so critical a time?"

"Airing Chloe, of course, like a dutiful son."—

"*No dons admitted*," said Frederica.

"Ordered, also, that the keepers do turn out all improper persons;"—and yet you see Mrs. Erskyne contrived to intrude! No rule without an exception, my dear sister."

"There, Launceston—you have driven mamma away with your scandalous chronicles;—you know how much she dislikes *les cancans*."

"She dislikes everything a virtuous woman ought to dislike," said Lord Launceston in a low voice, looking affectionately towards his mother who was leaving the room.

"No—no! my love,"—said the kind old lady. "William knows my habits:—he knows he has said nothing I disapprove. But I have Camomile's orders to take six turns in the drawing-room or any other cool apartment, every morning immediately after my chocolate. It is the only exercise I am allowed in the course of the day; and if anything interferes to prevent it, I am sure to grow flushed and feverish towards evening. Miss Elbany generally entertains your brother; for I prefer Wrightson's arm to lean on, even to dear Lucy's."

"I am glad she is gone," observed Lord Launceston, as

the door was carefully closed after the invalid by the obsequious hand of the attendant Wrightson.

"From the force of habit, I suppose;—'dear Lucy' cannot always be spared for an early walk in Kensington Gardens."

"Dear Frederica cannot always be spared to give audience to a brother's remonstrances."

"What!—have you not finished your homily?—Have you any further strictures to pronounce on poor Mrs. Erskyne's proceedings?"

"A great many on those of Lady Rawleigh!—I seldom find you alone; and I do not wish to vex Sir Brooke by making him share in my disapprobation."

"Now ask yourself seriously, my dear William,—are you qualified to play the monitor?—Does your own conduct entitle you to be severe with mine?"

"A brother is always entitled to watch over his sister's honour. Frederica, do not reply to me with one of Mrs. Erskyne's flippant witticisms. On my soul I am serious. I will admit my own career through life to have been everything you please that is disgraceful and contemptible.—But your brother's follies form no excuse for yours; and it is rather your knowledge of the straits and humiliation to which he has been reduced by profligate extravagance, which should serve as a check and warning to your own."

Frederica somewhat relieved to find that Lord Launceston's exhortations tended merely towards financial matters, now breathed more freely. She forgot how much of personal indiscretion she had recently mingled with the disposal of her revenue.

"I do assure you, my dear sister," he resumed in a kinder tone, "there are very few privations and mortifications I would not have undergone, in preference to hearing your name,—my own dear Frederica's unblemished name,—associated with those of the dupes and sharpers of fashionable life."

Lady Rawleigh started as this consideration presented itself for the first time to her mind.

"If there is anything repugnant to the feelings of a man of honour, or of a woman of delicacy," persisted Lord Launceston, "it is a female gambler;—a cold-blooded, calculating, mercenary woman, who—"

"Nay!" interrupted Frederica, feeling that this was a very exaggerated interpretation of her own offence, "foolish as I have been, my conduct has not earned this severe sentence of reprobation. I can honestly assure you that 'calculating' and 'mercenary' are epithets most unjustly applied."

"Do you mean to deny that you have lost a large sum of money at *écarté* within these few days?"

"Certainly not!—To oblige Lady Olivia, I thoughtlessly

contributed to the stakes at Ash Bank; and knowing nothing, and seeing nothing of the game, lost beyond—very far beyond my calculations. But of all the follies and vices of this world, play is the very last to offer any attraction in my eyes.”

“So have I often thought and sworn myself, when first entering the career of many a vice and many a folly. No one becomes deliberately a victim to his own weakness:—it is the presumption of vanity which blindfolds him to his ruin.”

“But, believe me, I am not blindfolded on this occasion. My first unlucky essay has given me little encouragement to persevere on the fatal path.”

“You have all the encouragement which flattery and bad example can afford. I know these people better than you do; and I avoid their society because I do know them. If my frailties of nature are to bring me into habits of familiarity with women of light character, I do not wish to find them among the associates of my sister or my future wife.”

“This is ungenerous!” cried Lady Rawleigh. “The indiscretion which has misled me into losing a portion of my allowance at the card-table, does not authorize you in injuring the character of those with whom I associate,—my equals in rank and respectability.”

“Character!—respectability!” reiterated Lord Launceston. “How long is it since either of those terms was applied to Lady Rochester, unless by your unsuspecting and inexperienced self!—Frederica! if you knew—if I dare unfold to your pure ears—facts connected with the repulsive women whom you pride yourself on making your associates, your pure heart would shrink from the contact. By Heavens! I would rather see you the companion of the leprous and the plague-stricken, than of these Hecates of evil.”

“Hush! hush!” cried Lady Rawleigh, laying her hands on his lips; “this violence mars all the influence of your arguments. I have no predilection whatever for the pursuits and habits of Lady Rochester and her set, and very little partiality towards themselves. That they maintain a high eminence in fashionable society, I think you will not deny; and finding them not only disposed to court me into their circle, but the circle itself unusually animated and agreeable, I have naturally returned again and again to Calder House. Lady Derenzy—Rawleigh’s near relative and privy councillor—has incessantly advised me to cultivate the liaison as exclusively worthy of—”

“Lady Derenzy knows about as much of the society of modern London, as the ghost of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, were it let loose upon the earth. She estimates Lady Rochester according to the date of her husband’s peerage, and

not according to the enormities of her moral conduct. But it was not alone to advise and to reprove, my dear Fred., that I entered into this vexatious discussion; my object was to remind you of your claims on the friendship and assistance of your brother. I hear you have been robbed of a considerable sum by these people; and for worlds I would not have you destroy your husband's confidence by demands of such a nature. I have no doubt," continued Lord Launceston, attempting to assume a gayer tone as he produced a pocket-book from his vest, "that you have the strange presumption to exaggerate my thriftlessness and poverty. But although on the point of selling my coronet to an heiress, I assure you, Fred., I am very far from bankruptcy; and you will seriously oblige me by applying this money to—"

"My dear, dear brother!" cried Lady Rawleigh, throwing her arms round Launceston's neck, while her eyes glistened with her tears, "I seemed to have plunged myself into difficulties and disgrace, only to become fully acquainted with the affectionate kindness of my nearest relatives. Believe me, I have no present occasion to trespass on my husband's generosity. My pin money, with the addition of a little gift forced on my acceptance by my aunt Olivia, will more than defray this heinous debt; and I have only to regret that she should have invalidated my impressions of her liberality, by perplexing you with tidings of my involuntary-imprudence."

"Lady Olivia!—on my honour and faith I have not had a syllable of communication with her since the breakfast. Lady Olivia!—why for the next week she will be incapable of uttering a sentence unconnected with the damage done to her lawns, and the havoc committed in her cellar!—No, my dear sister!—my intelligence proceeded from a very sincere admirer of yours;—a man not quite so high in your conceit as Calder and his brother libertines, although more freely admitted into your favourite gang than I should have presupposed possible;—I mean my future father-in-law,—Mr. Waddlestone."

"That impertinent man seems to make it his business to interfere in my concerns!" exclaimed Lady Rawleigh, with a petty recollection of his advice to Lady Olivia. "But with respect to his acceptance in Lady Rochester's set, I do not believe him to be on terms of even distant acquaintance with any one of the party. On the contrary, several of them interrogated me last night at Almack's, concerning your Leonora, who was there with Madame de Guéménée; and retracted every word they had uttered in her praise, when they heard her name and connected it with my notorious adventure at the drawing-room."

"There is not one of their tribe,—from Semiramis Roches-

ter, down to that deadly-night-shade-bud, Mrs. Erskyne, who is worthy to touch the hem of her garment!" cried Lord Launceston, with spirited indignation. "Leonora is the

Youngest virgin daughter of the skies ;

and so far as *I* may be permitted to influence her destiny, rely upon it she shall never become corrupted by association with such fallen angels as the Rochester faction.—No! Frederica, no!—there are still, thank Heaven, women to be found in our own rank of life, who reconcile a cheerful indulgence in the pleasures of society with unsullied purity in their domestic character; and without making a recluse of my wife, I am satisfied that I can preserve her from the contact of the vicious and the degraded,—the female flirt and the female gamester."

"And how do you intend to regulate her intimacy with your friend Miss Elbany?—Ah! Launceston—Launceston! I fear there is something of the *Tartuffe* in your admonitions to me;—I fear you stand accountant for as great a sin."

Lord Launceston turned away from his sister, and began to examine some Chinese puzzles and other fiddle-faddle *passetems* belonging to the dressing-room *macédoine*, in order to conceal his embarrassment.

"The more I see of Miss Waddlestone, who in spite of the odiousness of her parents I must admit to be one of the most delightful and captivating girls I ever beheld,—the more I am inclined to blame your manifest levity of conduct towards her,"—persisted Lady Rawleigh.

"I am sensible," replied her brother, evidently entering with reluctance into the subject, "that I appear to you to be playing a most unworthy part; and unfortunately I am so hampered with promises and engagements, that I must not at present hope for exculpation. All I can do is to entreat you will suspend your judgment, and rely on your brother's integrity for the result; and to beg you will not enter into any discussion of the Elbany affair with Lady Sophia Lee, who is just arrived; and who, for my evil destiny, is intimately connected with those insufferable Trevelyans,—my worst incumbrance after all!"

"What on earth has my poor cousin Mary to do with the interposing interests of Leonora and that odious companion of mamma's?"

"Nothing very ostensible, certainly. And yet, Frederica, were I at liberty to deal candidly and explicitly with you on the subject,—were I to acknowledge the profound impression—the idolatry—the infatuation which Lucy Elbany has—"

"I will not listen to such sacrilegious confessions. I hear

my mother's step on the stairs; and if you persist in these humiliating sentiments, I will fairly place before her the mischiefs in which she has inconsiderately entangled her son."

"Only one word more on the subject and I have done. Can you give me some insight into the true motive of Lucy's abrupt departure from town; and have you any idea how soon she will return to Charles-street?"

"Mamma acquaints me that one of her vulgar relatives has arrived unexpectedly from abroad;—probably some purser-uncle in the West India fleet,—or possibly some cousin returned from Swan River."

"If it were a brother returned from transportation," cried Lord Launceston, "it would make no difference in my veneration for *her*; I feel that life is insupportable to me during her absence!"

"Then you are acting in a most unjustifiable manner towards the Waddlestone family," replied Frederica, with spirit; but her mother, at that moment entering the room followed by Countess Ronthorst, who was in the habit of paying morning visits while the larks of Wormwood-scrubbs were still on their nests, there was no further possibility of remonstrance.—They were soon engaged in a discussion on the comparative merits of calcined magnesia, Henry's magnesia, and that of Godfrey,—of Savory,—of Tabbs,—of Weldon,—which caused poor Lady Launceston's eyes to sparkle with the eagerness of the controversy.

## CHAPTER VII.

A plain trotcasey suits my station better  
 Than these new fanglements. Lord me no lords!  
 I hate such pyes, 'quipped i' the gaudy spoil  
 Of Madam Juno's prying popinjay.

DEKKER.

At his mother's request Lord Launceston now proceeded to Bruton-street, to acquaint Sir Brooke with the cause of Frederica's absence, and to entreat his company to dinner; and poor Lady Rawleigh, whose heart had relented towards him from the moment of learning his innocence in the Mameluke business, and who was strongly disposed by her brother's rhetoric to forgive his prejudices against the Calder House society, now began to anticipate with eagerness a family reunion in Charles-street, secure from the annoyance of Miss Elbany's presence, and precursive of a final restoration of conjugal confidence.

But there is a special providence in the appointment even of a family-dinner!—and Lord Launceston, who was not covetous of a second edition of Countess Ronthorst's pharmacopœia, soon afterwards put his head into the dressing-room to announce that he had found Rawleigh engaged with Mr. Lexley and Sir Mark Milman, in some sort of parliamentary imbroglio;—who, having promised to dine in Queen-Anne-street, to meet the Lees, the only possible compromise was to offer Frederica's excuses, and explanations to Lady Derenzy of her mother's peculiar claims on her society. Lord Launceston bounded down stairs before his sister had time to enter into any further inquiries; and thus poor Frederica was doomed to another day's alienation from home and from her husband, and the tedious importunity of a morning of common-place visiting;—to a patient endurance of the exaggerated nothings of Lady Lavinia Lisle,—the obsequiousness of Camomile,—the garrulous domesticities of Lady Caroline Covey,—and the fussy officiousness of her aunt Olivia. Never had she felt so impatient of the monotony of her mother's humdrum coterie,—never so oppressed by its uneventful tedium. She envied even the moping linnet in the dingy drawing-room of Mrs. Martha Derenzy; and returned home at night so dispirited and overwearied in mind and body, that even Sir Brooke Rawleigh's knock on his return from the House failed to dispel her leaden slumbers.

But another knock was destined to assail the door in Bruton-street early the following morning which "murdered sleep." On entering the drawing-room, Lady Rawleigh had the mortification to discover that the contrarious Ruggs in remitting her a bank-bill for two hundred, and a bank-note for twenty pounds, under cover to "Sir B. Rawleigh, Bart. M. P. &c. &c. &c."—had thought proper to address a few words to his patron in the envelope, on some matter of Swedish turnips, or ruta бага,—which fairly placed at Sir Brooke's disposal the secret of her extensive demand on the agent; and although the presence of Mr. Richard Derenzy, who was seated at the breakfast-table prozing away during the process of his cousin's bread and butter, rendered all comment on the subject impossible, it was evident from the manner in which Rawleigh placed these diaphanous paper securities beside her coffee-cup, that his surprise and mistrust were strongly excited by so vast a corroboration of her personal extravagance.

Mr. Richard,—good soul!—wholly unsuspecting of the motive of her ladyship's blushes of acknowledgment, and of the possibility of a disagreement subsisting between two young persons in the honey year of their matrimonial life,—now took it into his head as country cousins are apt to do, to wax jocose touching Lady Rawleigh's absence from the family dinners of the two preceding days; and Frederica and her ruffled moiety had the satisfaction of being informed, with a knowing smile, that they were quite a fashionable couple;—lived apart as people of *ton* and the figures on a Dutch weather-glass ought to do;—and all the other cut-and-dried witticisms, which underbred people delight in wreaking upon members of the civilized community; and to which newly married, or jealous, or gouty persons, are subjected by especial patent.

"I assure you, Lady Rawleigh, you missed a very agreeable party yesterday," said Mr. Richard, with a little authoritative nod that marked his reliance on his own discrimination. "Lady Derenzy was in charming spirits,—full of anecdote. She gave us the whole history of the establishment of the blue-stocking club;—and some original anecdotes of the court of the Princess Augusta of Wales, and the adventures of the Duchess of Kingston."

"I have often heard her eloquent on those topics," said Frederica, drily.

"But Sir Brooke will, I am sure, confirm my opinion that she excelled herself yesterday. My wife and daughters were observing, as we drove home, that after all no one equals the vivacity, and information, and *bon ton* of Lady Derenzy."

Lady Rawleigh might have observed with equal justice that she had often heard *them* eloquent on that topic before.

"Then we had that charming person Mr. Broughley?—a perfect Encyclopedia,—a library of general knowledge,—a man who has seen everything—"

"And who takes care his friends shall hear of everything he has seen. In my opinion a more tiresome, importunate companion than Mr. Broughley does not exist. He always talks as if he were communicating a paper to some learned association, or giving an extempore predication at the Royal Society."

"Mr. Broughley is a person," replied Mr. Richard in the measured tone of what is called a sensible middle-aged man, "whose conversation, like an instructive book, may not be calculated for the atmosphere of a fashionable drawing-room. It is not to be expected," he continued with a knowing smile "that dandies and fine ladies should be interested in the phenomena of nature; or in knowing more of the productions of foreign countries than that 'for them the Tyrian murrey swimmeth,' the merinos of the Pyrenees cherisheth its daintiest wool, and the worm of Piedmont windeth its elaborate web."

Mr. Derenzy, who was delighted with himself for the learned eloquence of his reproof, rejoiced to perceive that the superficial wife of his kinswomen considered it unanswerable; for Frederica was now extremely busy in preparing a mess of pottage for Sir Brooke's favourite spaniel, a privileged intruder into the breakfast-room.—Its master, meanwhile, profited by his cousin's exhaustion of breath to enter into the conversation.

"I was glad to see General Lee looking so much the better for his residence abroad. *He*, I grant you, is a delightful companion; so gracious, so moderate, so kind-hearted, that his presence always tends to soften down the asperities of other people. We are afraid of appearing peremptory, or selfish, or opinionated, in company with so gentlemanly an old man."

"You cannot, however extend the former part of your compliment to Lady Sophia;—she, poor thing, is miserably altered. She never was a great favourite in my family previous to her marriage, and is grown far more disagreeable since. It is not satisfactory to hear so young a woman deliver decided opinions on all subjects, without regard to the insufficiency of her sex and period of life; and a man of reflective habits becomes disgusted by such unwarrantable assumption."

"Oh! I have now been long enough a married man," said Sir Brooke, who was somewhat mollified towards Frederica

by the zeal with which she was presiding over Rover's repast, "to adopt the theory of an equality of intellect between the sexes. Any existing discrepancy is doubtless the fruit of education; indeed, on the whole, I think there are *more* clever women in the world than able men; only it is our interest not to let them find it out."

"Aha!" cried Mr. Richard with a facetious glance towards Frederica—"I am beginning to learn the secrets of Rawleighford; and to know where to attribute the want of subordination in this house.—Well!—well!"

"Lady Sophia does not, I hope, appear to have suffered in health?" said Lady Rawleigh, without noticing his humorous familiarities.

"She always is, or fancies herself an invalid;—one of the mental delusions peculiarly characterizing the superior understanding of the fair sex!"

"I intend walking to see her after breakfast, if Sir Brooke has leisure to accompany me as far as Kirkham's hotel," said Frederica, inquiringly; "and if not, perhaps, Mr. Derenzy, you will oblige me by becoming my escort?"

"Surely you have some engagement at home?"—sternly inquired the astonished husband,—who had by no means forgotten the mysterious rendezvous given at Almack's to Lord Calder.

"No!" replied Lady Rawleigh, blushing deeply, and as he feared, guiltily. "None which require my presence. Shall you be able to accompany me?"

"Certainly—of course!" replied Sir Brooke, still more and more amazed by her inconsistency; while Frederica proceeded to her dressing-room to equip herself for the visit and to enclose in an envelope "with Lady Rawleigh's compliments," to Lord Calder, those luckless notes which it had cost Obadiah Ruggs so many pangs to emit from his strong box. Having despatched the packet to Calder House by the hands of her own footman, she returned to the gentlemen; and a deliberate saunter of half an hour along the shady side of the streets brought them to Kirkham's hotel, and decided the important fact that "Lady Sophia Lee was at home." Sir Brooke, therefore, who had already paid his ceremonious visit of welcome to the General, took leave of Frederica at the foot of the stairs, after an arrangement that the carriage should be sent for her at two o'clock.

At so early an hour, Lady Rawleigh had fully promised herself the pleasure of an interview with her friend Lady Sophia unrestrained by the presence of other morning visitors. But the General was a man of old-fashioned habits, and old-fashioned hours; and Frederica, on entering his apartments, found the hum of general conversation established in an ex-

tensive circle. Lady Sophia, who had been accustomed during her whole life to exist in a crowd, was however so little embarrassed by the extent of her levee, that she instantly made her way towards the door with an exclamation of delight, and folded her in her arms with a degree of warmth somewhat unusual in our coldly courteous climate. General Lee rose from his seat, with his usual air of courteous high-breeding, to receive as a matron and a kinswoman the beautiful woman he had left a timid unmeaning girl,—an inanimate fixture in Lady Launceston's hermetically sealed drawing-room; and Lady Rawleigh, after glancing round the circle, and observing that it included the Prince de Guéménée, Lord Vardington, Lord Wroxworth,—to whom she offered the necessary tokens of recognition,—and two or three olive-coloured foreigners who were emphasizing Italian with both heart and hand, found herself eagerly withdrawn by Lady Sophia towards a distant extremity of the room, where their gossiping could receive no interruption from the discussions of the General's associates, nor offer any to their graver arguments.

"My dearest Frederica," cried Lady Sophia with earnest cordiality, "how very little did I dream, when I last saw you dropping *sal-volatile* in the dressing-room in Charles-street, that I should find you on my return to England installed a denizen of the Derenzy clan! My cousin Horatio Rhyse was desperately in love with you just then;—and heaven knows I heard enough from morning till night of Frederica Rawdon, and her virtues and accomplishments, to have made me hate anything less gentle and unpretending than you appeared. But I always told him he was much too poor to trouble either you or himself with matrimonial visions; and had no notion, meanwhile, how vast an obligation my counsels were conferring on the united houses of Rawleigh and Derenzy."

"You owed them some compensation," replied Frederica, attempting to emulate the courtesy of her companion, "for having deserted their society for that of General Lee."

"Come—come!" cried Lady Sophia. "Do not give me reason to suppose *you* deteriorated by contact with that odious toadying tribe at Twickenham! You have no excuse for becoming a flatterer,—for I suspect you have neither '*sum in a gondola*,' nor '*seen the Louvre*.'"

"I trust it is not to the extent of your own travels I am indebted for your favourable interpretation?" said Lady Rawleigh, laughing.

"My dear coz.,—for such for the future you must allow me to consider you,—were you to pass twenty-four hours in my company, you could admit that neither a pilgrimage to

Bagdad, nor a voyage to Mexico, would suffice to tame down my truth-telling propensities. My frankness, or brusquerie, or whatever the good or ill-natured may term my authenticity of word and action,—has ever been a considerable drawback on my happiness and popularity. But now that I have wasted so many words on myself and my qualities, tell me in return a little about the change in your own destinies. I dined yesterday in company with Sir Brooke, who was good-natured enough to lend me your horse, and ride with me the day before; and you cannot imagine how delighted I was to find myself in possession of a companionable cousin, instead of the great awkward boy who used to come home to us from Rugby for the holidays, with two large red hands, which had outgrown the sleeves of his jacket by a quarter of a yard."

"I hope you did not attribute the change solely to his tailor," said Frederica, rather affrontedly.

"No!—solely to yourself. *He*, you know, was Lord Derenzy's favourite nephew,—and I her ladyship's favourite niece,—so that mutual antipathy was inevitable; more especially as Master Rawleigh's virtues in brushing and scraping his shoes before he crossed the spotless marble hall were always pointed out to the imitation of Lady Sophia Rhyse,—who was apt to introduce into the drawing-room half the gravel of the Twickenham flower-garden."

Frederica, secretly reverting to her husband's lingering predilection for dirty boots, could not help feeling that he now appeared inclined to repay himself for the privations of his boyhood.

"Even at the period of my marriage, when he had just left Oxford, the poor fellow was shockingly aunt-and-uncle ridden. Tell me! how did you manage to extricate him from poor dear twaddling old Martha Derenzy's leading-strings, and Lady Derenzy's snafflebit?"

"I will not undertake to prove that he is even yet wholly emancipated."

"But he is in parliament, and grown a man of the world;—sends down his pretty wife alone to a fashionable breakfast,—lends her horses and chariots to other ladies during her absence,—and behaves in short quite like other people. Believe me, my dear Frederica, this is a marvellous point of civilization to have been attained by one of the pupils of the Derenzy school! All those people are full fifty years in arrears of their century."

"Sir Brooke is guided in his general conduct by the best of monitors,—good plain sense, and an upright heart."

"A very proper, plausible, and conjugal sentence! It seems decreed by universal concession in England, that all *plain* things *must* be good; and that virtues like beauty, needs

not the foreign aid of ornament. For my part, I would have merit as handsome as the Apollo; on the same grounds which induce mankind to lavish all the treasures of the arts on the temples of the gods. But now having abused and praised your husband to our hearts' content, afford me some intelligence of a person who, when I last saw him, was neither plain *nor* good;—your brother—”

“Surely Launceston was one of your riding party the day before yesterday?” inquired Lady Rawleigh; “and surely you must know more than myself of his proceedings, from Colonel Rhyse who is his constant companion.”

“The very reason I should mistrust his compte rendu;—any accusation of his friend necessarily involves Horatio;—and one of the chief uses of an Horatio is to cog, and lie, and bluster in Prince Hamlet's favour! Yes!—I *did* ride in your brother's company; but what did I learn by such casual association, except that he had a blood horse, and a well-made hat!—I want to hear something of his loves and hates,—his friendships and attachments.”

“William is too kind-hearted to hate anything; with respect to his attachments, he is said to be engaged to a soap-boiler's daughter,—or to her attractions in the funds.”

“Hush! hush!”—eagerly whispered Sophia, glancing towards the circle at the other end of the room. “With all my predilection for sincerity, I think you overstep the mark.” And without in the least comprehending the implication contained in this reproof, Lady Rawleigh was involuntarily reminded by Lady Sophia's air of mystery, of her brother's accountable anxiety that his friend Rhyse's cousin should not be made acquainted with the position of his love affairs. Frederica felt vexed when she recollected how nearly she had been upon the point of betraying his secret.

“I am glad to see you have the grace to be ashamed of yourself,” resumed Lady Sophia, in the same unintelligible strain, “and I sincerely wish that Lord Launceston may follow your example;—for verily he has more than equal reason. I am come back to England quite in the humour to throw down my gauntlet to him; and if he had not been so assiduous about your horse and my ride, he would have had to exhibit articles of the peace against me long before this.”

“What can poor William have done to offend you?—I am sure *his* regular habits have never been held up as a warning or example to any one.”

“Oh, no!—but *his* sins are quite as enormous as Sir Brooke Rawleigh's virtues!—That little mincing parvenu Mrs. Woodington whom I met at Paris, and who, as the Lady Viscountess Twadell, is on the point of returning to astonish London with a trousseau worthy a Russian grand-duchess,—

assured me he was exposing himself by a connexion with some governess, whom he would probably end by marrying."

"I think not,—I hope not!" cried Lady Rawleigh. "But even were he tempted to so gross an act of folly and self-degradation, tell me, my dear Lady Sophia, what interest have you in William and his peccadilloes? I imagined that you were scarcely acquainted with him?"

"Nor am I!—But he happens to be a source of affliction to a person whom I dearly love;—who, but for him would be deservedly blessed with all the happiness which prosperity and excellence can bestow."

"My dearest Lady Sophia, you stimulate my curiosity!—What *can* Launceston have done,—and *who* can you mean?"

"It is not so much the things he has done, as the things which he has left undone, that move my indignation. I lived four months at Rome in the same hotel with Lord Trevelyan; and I can assure you, without the least compromise of my vaunted sincerity, that I found in Lady Mary all the virtues of a genuine Englishwoman, all the accomplishments of her adopted country, and all the beauty of an angel."

"Alas!" replied Lady Rawleigh, "your assurances only corroborate my previous impressions: Everything I have heard of my cousin Mary from those who are worthy to estimate so gifted a person, inclines me to believe her the most charming of women."

"Yet with all her attractions and all the brilliancy of her worldly prospects, this infatuated girl will not be persuaded to overlook that absurd engagement which contracted her to your brother before either of them were out of their leading-strings! She has had half-a-dozen English coronets, and twice as many Italian and German principalities laid at her feet,—in many instances by men really deserving her regard; and Lord Trevelyan, who is growing very infirm, is wild to see her happily married and settled."

"It is really vexatious that she should cling to an engagement which is evidently distasteful to Launceston,—and which at best affords her such very moderate prospects."

"Vexatious?—Mary's pertinacity is a positive evidence of aberration of intellect. Can you believe that she is as romantically in love with your brother, as if he were the most devoted of Paladins?—She will not allow one disparaging syllable to be uttered concerning him in her presence;—preserves his picture in a nankin frock riding on a Newfoundland dog, as a precious relic of their early attachment;—learns by heart every passage in yours and your mother's letters in which his name is mentioned;—and is in short as

ridiculous on every point that concerns him, as if she had not a grain of understanding.—Poor dear Mary!

"I no longer wonder that Launceston is out of your good graces;—I am half inclined to banish him from mine," said Lady Rawleigh. "What can be done to bring either of them to their senses?—I greatly fear it is altogether a hopeless case with William. Do you think I may venture to write explicitly to Lady Mary or my uncle on the subject?"—

"Hush! do not elevate your voice,—Mr. Waddlestone will hear you:—I suspect he has already caught some sentences of our debate."

"Mr. who?"

"Your friend, or your brother's friend, the soap-boiler," whispered Lady Sophia. "I would not hurt his feelings for the world;—there are few persons for whom I retain a more sincere regard."

"They are all gone," replied Frederica, looking towards General Lee and his friends, "except the Prince de Guéménée and Lord Vardington."

"My dear cousin you are as bewildered as poor Mary!—Of what are you dreaming?—I am acquainted with no Lord Vardington;—I thought the title was extinct.—That tall dark man engaged in conversation with the General, is Mr. Waddlestone of Waddlestone House!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

M'amuser, n'importe comment  
 Fait toute ma philosophie !  
 Je crois ne perdre aucun moment  
 Hors le moment où je m'ennuie.  
 Et je tiens ma tâche finie  
 Pourvu que tout doucement  
 Je me défasse de la vie.

PARNY.

THE arrival of Lady Sophia Lee produced a gradual change in the occupations and connexions of Lady Rawleigh, which proved equally satisfactory to her husband, her brother, and herself.—It is true Lady Sophia was not precisely such a companion as the mild and timid Lady Launceston would have selected for her daughter; for Mr. Richard Derenzy's charges against the abruptness of her demeanour and the opinionated and trenchant tone of her conversation were not altogether groundless. She seemed indeed to care nothing for the feelings of other people; and a very little for her own. The influence of her callous philosophy was universal and unsparing.

But Lady Sophia was a woman of unimpeachable character, strong understanding, good connexions,—and peculiarly acceptable to the Derenzy family from her consanguinity with themselves. Lady Launceston therefore made it a point to cement her friendship with Frederica by every courtesy in her power to offer: and she had soon the satisfaction to perceive that their joint tenure of the Opera-box was the sole bond of amity remaining between Lady Rawleigh and Mrs. William Erskyne: while her daughter's intimacy with the Calder coterie was now only maintained with the ordinary politeness of society.

But if Lady Launceston in the warmth of her motherly heart rejoiced over these changes, what was the rapture with which Sir Brooke perceived the groundlessness of his worst suspicions, and hailed the gradual disparition of the remainder! Frederica, secure in Lady Sophia of an eligible companion for her morning drives and afternoon rides, was no longer exposed to the perils of a tête-à-tête with Lord Calder, whether premeditated or unpremeditated. The fatal miniature was not only brought home in triumph from Rochard's to display its exquisite beauties in the dressing-room in Charles-

street, but Sir Brooke had gratefully bespoken a copy for his own at Rawleighford ;—while under sanction of General and Lady Sophia Lee the mysterious Lord Vardington became in his real character a welcome visitor to the Rawleigh family. Under these favourable circumstances, he almost forgot to repine at the peculiar prolongation of the session ;—and if once or twice he was heard to hazard some murmuring allusion to the verdure of the Warwickshire beech-woods, and the excellence of the Rawleighford strawberries, it was the opinion of all the aunts, uncles, and cousins Derenzy, that dear Sir Brooke had never been seen in such excellent spirits.

By Miss Elbany's absence, too, Frederica appeared restored to her accustomed equanimity and tenderness of nature. Her mother was now once more her own ;—her jealous fears on her husband's account were wholly dispelled. Even her apprehensions that Lord Launceston would disgrace himself by a double perfidy towards Lucy and Leonora had in a great measure subsided ; although at times the undecided claims of Lady Mary Trevelyan and her brother's tender reminiscences of the companion, excited her indignation against his apparent infirmity of purpose.

But happy as she was, and restored to the confidence of all who were dear to her, there was still one thorn among the roses,—one fatal remembrancer of past follies,—haunting like the tangible *memento mori* of the Egyptian festivals the scene of all her enjoyments. She had never yet found courage to acquaint Sir Brooke with the circumstance of her losses at play ;—and although deterred from the confession chiefly by an apprehension that it might be interpreted into a hint for pecuniary assistance in the scrape, the sin of disingenuousness weighed heavily on her heart. Five weeks, too, were still to elapse previous to the quarterly payment of her pin money : and the price of the miniature and a few other inevitable purchases had reduced her stock within a few sovereigns of total exhaustion. No one indeed thought less of money than Frederica,—because no one could have been placed more completely beyond its need ; nor till she found herself threatened with an empty purse, had a pecuniary care ever intruded on her mind. But she now became perplexed by a thousand vague presentiments. Every single knock at the door seemed annunciatory of some trifling bill peculiarly addressed to her “separate maintenance,”—some milliner's or shoemaker's, or haberdasher's, or bookseller's “small account.”—Whenever a wafered note was placed in her hands, she scarcely dared unfold the nauseous page, from a dread of some authenticated memorial from a poor widow with half a dozen small children, or from some starving labourer with a

broken limb. Never had she been so morbidly sensitive to the wants of the poor;—never so fervent in her wishes for the preservation and prosperity of his Majesty's lieges;—and she would have preferred to see all Grosvenor-square blackened into ashes, rather than that a destructive fire should take place in the purlieus of St. Giles's, or that populous city of Irish starvation, the Westminster Broadway!—She was, in short, thoroughly humiliated by the consciousness of bankruptcy; and Lady Rawleigh of Rawleighford,—with her diamonds, her equipages, and her *pin money*,—would have been as heartily rejoiced by the discovery of a fifty pound note in her dressing-case, as any of the memorializing widows or fractured bricklayers!

Meanwhile, the season held its course with more than its wonted intemperance of dissipation. Balls,—both fancy and matter-of-fact,—concerts,—dinner-parties—water-parties,—breakfasts,—and picnics,—were successively hailed in prospect, yawned over in endurance, and apostrophized as charming on the following week. A few new marriages, new scandals, and new ruinations, enlivened the scene,—one mansion was devoted to white favours,—one dishonoured by a divorce-bill,—and another by that of an auctioneer pasted against the door-posts. Lady Barbara Dynley was said to have lost an alarming sum of money,—and Mrs. William Erskyne a considerable amount of reputation.

It was while pondering over this latter contingency, and reflecting upon the difficulty of offering advice to her giddy friend, or extricating herself from the connexion without a serious explanation and dispute, that Frederica was one morning assailed by Lady Sophia Lee.

"What are you doing with those broken harp-strings," cried she, as she burst into the drawing-room, "and on what are you cogitating so profoundly?—Considering how to evade Mrs. Waddlestone's impending concert,—and stay at home for the enjoyment of what our friend Lord George calls

The whithpered dweam of heartht allied  
The pwethure of the thwilling hand!"

"Neither!" replied Lady Rawleigh. "I am reflecting on the horrors of a bridal visit which Lady Olivia insists on my paying this morning to her *ci-devant* friend Mrs. Woodington."

"To Lady Twadell!—is that exquisite treat really vouchsafed us?—What a luxury!—I trust you have not promised yourself to your aunt for the occasion, for I must insist that we enjoy it together."

"With all my heart;—your carriage is here,—let us go immediately."

"Willingly!—on condition that you lend me some shabby old bonnet for the ceremony."

"Surely the beautiful piece of Parisianism you have on, is better fitted for the occasion than anything my wardrobe can afford?"

"By no means!—I conceive my white moire bonnet with its elm-branch, to be one of the prettiest in London; and I must insist on having some old Dunstable horror, such as you assume, to visit the poor women in your Warwickshire village. I would not for the world but gratify Lady Twadell by affording an advantageous contrast to her bridal finery. One should always be considerate towards the foibles and predilections of one's friends."

"Lady Twadell, I fancy, is as little yours as mine. But pray do not disfigure yourself this morning; for I wish you to take me afterwards to Lady Rochester's—of whom I have been totally negligent during the ten days of your stay in town; and she attacked me fiercely on the subject last night in Lady Axeter's concert-room. Pray reserve the elm-branch for Lady Rochester!—She is really deserving some *recherche de toilette*, for no one makes it more seriously the study of her life."

"I would not go near her for the value of Lady Twadell's trousseau! She is one of the few persons who expose me to the heavy responsibility of unchristian hatred!" cried Lady Sophia, growing alternately red and pale with a degree of emotion such as Frederica had never before traced on her countenance.

"Indeed!—I have seen you go through the ceremony of greeting in society, and was not aware that any ungracious feeling secretly subsisted between you. Before your arrival I lived very much in that Calder House set, and was very well amused. But neither my brother nor Rawleigh were pleased with the connexion."

"Yes, yes!—I know it all! Before I had been twenty-four hours in town, one of your dear friends,—whom I will not name to you, because I think you would be justified in boxing her ears on detection,—informed me that 'poor dear Lady Rawleigh was exposing herself sadly on Lord Calder's account;—that she owed him a vast sum of money;—and that most people thought some very terrible *dénouement* would occur before the season was over.' Knowing *you*, I was not apprehensive;—but knowing him, I felt anxious to do my part in breaking off so pernicious a *liaison*. Pardon me, dear coz., if my officious zeal has sometimes tempted

me to bestow on you an importunate measure of my tediousness."

"I am quite sure you cherish no such modest apprehension!" cried Lady Rawleigh, affectionately. "I am however of your opinion that Calder is a dangerous bosom friend for a woman of my age; and will own it is just as well that our intimacy was checked. That is as much as I can allow!—And now come, and choose your bonnet from my ugliest assortment, and I promise you not to decoy you to Lady Rochester's on any pretence."

"Whose flaunting liveries are those?" said Lady Sophia, as they stopped at the door of the bridegroom Viscount, in Hertford-street. "By the splendours of the hammercloth I could be tempted to believe that odious offset of the Derenzy tree, our cousin of Luttrell, was beforehand with us this morning."

"I rejoice that you judge so harshly of yonder Leadenhall-street equipage," said Frederica, laughing; "for it is the favourite appanage of a lady who is so unlucky as to sail in the north of my opinion. Do you remember a certain Laura Mapleberry?"

"Who was laying active siege to Rawleighford when I quitted England?—I recollect feeling terribly afraid lest Lady Mapleberry should involve poor Brooke in the Oriental misdemeanour of polygamy; for she seemed to me to make love to him with her full battery of daughters."

"Fortunately the whole volley of Miss Mapleberrys missed fire;—and Laura,—the fieldpiece of the park,—consoled herself by marrying a yellow nabob,—a Sir Christopher Lotus;—

A puny insect shivering at a breeze,

whom they keep alive in cotton like the exotic snakes in a zoological collection. When I am in an amiable frame of mind, I really pity the poor girl; for I fancy this little old man of the sea is as tiresome and malignant as any Afrite Genius released from the eye of a needle in the caverns of Caucasus."

Turning at that moment towards her companion, Frederica was surprised and shocked to perceive the countenance of Lady Sophia distorted as if by some painful spasm, while she involuntarily exclaimed, "How dreadful!—what a disgraceful meeting!—one woman who has sold herself for rank—another for money,—another for—God forgive us!"

Before Lady Rawleigh could recover her amazement at this startling apostrophe, they were ushered into the drawing-room of the bride;—where, according to their anticipations,

they found Lady Lotus accompanied by Miss Matilda Mapleberry, in the act of offering her congratulations. The room was redolent of orange-flowers, gardenias, heliotropes, and all the most fragrant offerings of the Woodington-park conservatories; nor was Frederica surprised that in such an atmosphere the new Viscountess should find it necessary to assume an attitude of elegant languor, among the embroidered cushions of her sofa,—and to hold in her hand a flacon of aromatic salts encased in gold basket-work, which “ever and anon she gave her nose.”

“My dear Lady Sophia,” exclaimed the bride, half rising from her seat on their entrance, “how very kind of you to recollect me:—Lady Rawleigh! I am delighted to see you. Really among the crowds which throng around us on these embarrassing occasions, it is quite refreshing to see one welcome face! Between Lord Twadell’s numerous family connexions, and my own extensive acquaintance, I assure you I have never had one moment since my return to England, to think of anything but thanking my friends for their flattering attentions;—or, as you may suppose, I should have done something towards reforming the barbarisms, solecisms, and improprieties of this Gothic mansion.”

“I see nothing that demands a change,” replied Lady Rawleigh with perfect simplicity; casting her eyes round the apartments, which were splendidly furnished, although not in the newest gloss of novelty.

“A bachelor’s residence,” minced the Viscountess, “cannot of course be expected to afford all those little refinements of luxury which spring forth under the culture of a female hand.”

“Certainly not!” said Lady Sophia, resolved to discompose her affectation. “Lord Twadell will naturally expect you to give a new aspect to things; and when you have had Banting here, and Morel, and got rid of all this obsolete lumber, really the house itself will not be so *very* much amiss. Of course, when it is entirely refitted, you will avoid the gaudy taste,—the superabundance of gilding and varnish,—by which it is now disfigured. Nothing is more odious or more thoroughly exploded than finery;—it appears left by general consent to city knights and retired nabobs.”

Lady Lotus grew very fidgety on her chair;—and Miss Matilda ventured a few incoherent sentences touching the new suite at Chatsworth, and the new furniture at Windsor Castle.

“I beg your pardon?”—said Lady Sophia, interrogatively, —resolved to make her speak intelligibly; and Miss Mapleberry with some indignation found herself obliged to recapitulate her unlucky illustrations.

"Chatsworth!—Windsor!"—said Lady Sophia, with a significant smile. "Of course I was not alluding to palaces, or to the mansions of persons of illustrious rank. I spoke of our own middling sphere of life;—and it would be absurd indeed in Lady Rawleigh, Lady Twadell, or myself, to emulate the magnificence of persons of so elevated a position in the world!"

The new Viscountess had recourse to her salts. To be compared with a country baronet's wife!—with a ladyship by courtesy!

"These pictures, too," continued Lady Sophia, "you will of course despatch to Lord Twadell's country-seat?"

Lady Rawleigh longed to whisper to her that his lordship possessed only a tumble-down Castle Rackrent mortgaged over rafters and roof, on the borders of the Bog of Allen.

"They are generally thought very fine," said Lady Twadell.—"Two of them are Rubens's."

"Oh yes!—I recognize my old friends;—the originals are in Prince Lichtenstein's gallery at Vienna. Excellent gallery-pictures,—or even admissible in a fine old oak dining-room in the country;—but a Rubens in a drawing-room facing the evening sun, is almost too much for one in the fervid months of June and July."

"You must send them to Woodington Park," cried Lady Lotus, bringing up her forces to the support of her discountenanced friend. "Did you ever see Woodington, Lady Rawleigh?—I really think it is one of the most beautiful places in England."

"You are partial, my dear Lady Lotus!" simpered the bride.—"I own it *has* been much admired, and there seldom appears a series of the distinguished country-seats of the kingdom, in which it is not included. It has been vignettied twice in Peacock's Repository."

"Surely the house is visible for some miles from the North-road?" inquired Frederica, without intending an epigram.

"Aha!—the plantations not yet grown up?" said Lady Sophia. "That accounts for General Lee's ignorance of its whereabouts.—His father, Lord Frederick, had an old family seat in that neighbourhood where the General's childhood was passed, but he could not bring himself to recollect Woodington.—I conclude it has been built since he left the country."

Lady Twadell was on the point of making some bitter allusion to General Lee's antediluvian reminiscences, when it occurred to her that he had been fag at Eton to her own bridegroom the Viscount; and she was therefore forced to content herself with observing, "Woodington Park was sketched by Capability Brown, and completed by Repton."

Picturesque Price used to say that the artificial water was a triumph of art; and many of the first artists—Copley Fielding, Dewint, Nicholson, and Glover, have visited it for the benefit of their composition landscapes.”—

“I cannot see anything so very delightful,” said Lady Lotus, “in being surrounded by grim forests and overgrown woods, which compel one to build a Tower of Babel, like Mr. Beckford, in order to overlook the country.”

“I fancy,” observed Lady Sophia secretly enjoying the storm she had raised, “I fancy Vathek’s tower was projected to enable him to overlook the pigmies of the earth, and not its natural productions. It must be a triumphant sensation to exist in a region above all contact with the mites of corruption;—a sphere where the stars seem to shine more brightly, and where the grosser exhalations of the world attain not!—There!—there is a burst of the sublime and beautiful for you!—But to descend from such abstruse altitudes, pray tell me, my dear Lady Twadell, how did you manage to get over the splendid trousseau I saw preparing for you in Paris?”

“I declare I hardly know!—I believe Herbault undertook it;—or some of Lord Twadell’s people managed the business.”

“But Herbault holds too closely to his prerogative to interfere with anything less ethereal than gauze and marabouts; and I am sure I saw a Viscountess’s coronet, embroidered on some dozens of dozens of dozens of familiar garments in lawn and cambric, on the counters of half the lingères of St. Honoré. Oh! here is Lady Olivia Tadcaster! She will tell us how she manages these affairs;—but then her interest will always procure *her* the name of one of the ambassadors as a *passé-droit*.”

Lady Olivia, however, was an independent personage who always thought proper to select her own vein of loquacity; and after paying her compliments to her former protégée the Viscountess,—towards whom she preserved a slight degree of pique for having accomplished a matrimonial barter without her intervention,—admired the mechin of her cap, and hinted that women of a certain age always did well to envelope the mysteries of their faces in a similar framework *by daylight*,—she turned suddenly to Lady Lotus with many expressions of delight at so opportune an encounter.

“I fully intended calling on you this morning if I could possibly manage to get so far as Portland-place. But really it is so out of one’s beat that I can seldom accomplish the journey; and I keep a little by-list of my East Indian friends,—the directors’ wives,—and one or two Calcutta people such as Lady Cabob and Mrs. Budgerow whom I picked up one

autumn at Cheltenham,—so that I may contrive to strike them all off in one morning.”

“I should have been extremely sorry,” said Lady Lotus, swelling with indignation, “had your Ladyship taken the trouble of driving so far in compliment to *me*.”

“Oh! pray don’t mention it,” cried Lady Olivia with a spontaneous and unpremeditated flow of impertinence. “I should have thought nothing of it, only I have promised to be with Lady Axeter this afternoon—who lives, you know, in Arlington-street, in the civilized part of the town;—to take her some little saleable trumperies which I have persuaded my worthy Ash Bank neighbours, the Miss Peewits, to put out their eyes in manufacturing for her Charity Bazaar.—And by the way, I certainly *will* buy Clara Peewit a pair of green spectacles before I go back into Essex;—they cost little or nothing in the Burlington Arcade. As to her sister Maria, I wipe off my obligations to *her* by making over to her my patronage at the Missionary Society, the Tract Association, and the Auricular Infirmary,—for which I have no possible use.”

Lady Sophia and Frederica involuntarily exchanged glances. But Lady Lotus could not so tamely put up with the affronts offered to her own gorgeous domicile.—

“Next to these charming Park-lane residences,” she observed, pointedly addressing the bride, “I must say I prefer an airy quarter, such as the immediate vicinity of the Regent’s-park. The Duke of Droneham, who frequently calls on me in his daily drive, is always envying our situation; and old Lady Borenough declares she should expect to live for ever, if she resided in Portland-place.”

“For the benefit of posterity let us hope she may never quit Argyll-street!” cried Lady Sophia. “As to the Duke of Droneham, the poor asthmatic old soul only contrives to exist by airing himself half the day among the kangaroos in the Zoological gardens.”

“But to return to the motive of my visit,” interrupted Lady Olivia, although she had never yet alluded to the subject. “I think, my dear Lady Lotus, I may say that I have satisfactorily executed your mission.”

“Oh! I will not hear a word about it now,” cried poor Laura, looking extremely uneasy, “or you will deprive me of the pleasure of your promised visit. I am in no hurry to acquaint myself with the result.”

Notwithstanding the assiduity with which Lady Twadell now attempted the task of amusing Lady Sophia and her friend,—whom she conceived could be in no way interested in any affair pending between Lady Lotus and Lady Olivia while the attentions of a viscountess were at their disposal,

—they managed to overhear the following interesting rejoinder.

"Why really nothing would give me greater pleasure than to wait on you, but you see, my dear ma'am, although my horses are only jobs, so that I can work them without compunction, I am obliged to have a little mercy on my servants; therefore, as we *have* met, I may as well give you Mrs. Waddlestone's answer at once. I told her, as you desired, how much you had been indebted to Mr. W.'s politeness at the races,—and how long you had been anxious to make her acquaintance,—that Mrs. Luttrell had promised to make the introduction at her ball, and all the rest of it;—and she begged me to assure you, that—"

"Thank you—thank you," cried the agonized Lady Lotus. "I am infinitely obliged by the explanation you have given. Having expressed my thanks for the use of Mr. Waddlestone's carriage, I need not trouble either your ladyship or myself further on the subject."

"Oh! excuse me, the most important part of the negotiation remains unexplained. Mrs. Waddlestone requested me to say that she should make it a point to take an early opportunity of returning your card; but with respect to an invitation for you and the Miss Mapleberrys to her concert, she regretted to say that it was quite out of her power,—that the whole affair is under the arrangement of the Princesse de Guéménée and the Duchess of Whitehaven, with whom I fancy you are not acquainted."

Lady Lotus, with a face like scarlet, now rose to take leave, while Lady Sophia inquired of the viscountess, "*You*, of course, are going to Waddlestone House?—It will be the best thing of the season, and a capital opportunity to show off some of your bridal embroideries."

"Why, really just now," said Lady Twadell, looking oppressed with humility, "while the eyes of all the world are upon me, I wish to avoid the tax of going into public. Next year I shall be no longer a novelty,—shall have subsided into the multitude."

"You need not be afraid of any embarrassing distinctions at the Waddlestones," said Lady Sophia. "You will be outroared by a whole heard of lions."

"Rossini is coming over from Madrid for the occasion; Fodor has promised to recover her voice for that one day;—Paganini is to play on two violins with one bow;—Pasta will sing an English ballad;—and Malibran a Yankee comic song!—Don't be the least alarmed," said Lady Olivia putting forth with great naïveté the announcements she had credulously received from Lord Launceston; "I assure you your presence will not be remarked among such a host of wonders."

"Who *are* these Waddlestones?" persisted Lady Twadell, fastidiously. "People one can know without committing oneself?"—

"That depends upon the position of the parties," said Lady Sophia. "The Draxfields, Axeters, Wroxworths, Guéménées, Whitehavens, and persons of that stamp can know them with perfect security. I doubt whether *you* are yet sufficiently established in society to venture."

"I dare say I shall be forced there whether I like it or not," said the bride, languidly. "Lord Twadell knows every one, and I have very little doubt these Waddlestones will give him no peace till we promise to go."

"Lord Twadell was so shocked at my rashness in presenting Mrs. Waddlestone," said Frederica, "that I am pretty sure you will meet with no compulsion from *him* on this occasion."

"Why surely you do not mean that all this fuss is about a party to be given by that preposterous soapboiler's wife?" cried the viscountess, having again recourse to her salts. "What will the world come to!"

"I cannot guess!" cried Lady Sophia, rising for departure;—"but at present it is going, you see, to Waddlestone House; and I recommend you to join it, if you can in any way diplomatize for an invitation. Good morning, Lady Twadell!—I leave you to arrange the matter with Lady Olivia Tadcaster, who on such occasions is the kindest and most efficient plenipotentiary in Europe."

## CHAPTER V.

Tells how each beauty of her mind and face  
 Was brightened by some sweet peculiar grace ;  
 Tells how her manners by the world refin'd,  
 Left all the taint of modish vice behind,  
 And made each charm of polished courts agree  
 With candid truth's simplicity  
 And uncorrupted innocence.

LITTLETON.

BUT an entertainment was destined to precede the morning concert at Waddlestone House which, if less difficult of access, was far more eagerly sought by the universal throng of the fashionable world.

Lord Calder, although he usually restricted himself to a specific routine of hospitality,—of the noblest and most distinguished order, but unmarked by any mountebank displays to excite the criticisms of the newspapers and the witticisms of the clubs,—having now discovered that Lady Rawleigh pertinaciously abstained from appearing at his weekly soirées, and that she had declined two dinner-parties expressly framed in her honour, resolved on taking some marked step to allure her to his house. When they met in the nightly round of balls or parties, she received his attention with the same gentle courtesy as heretofore,—so that he had no reason to apprehend any serious displeasure or estrangement on her part; while the frank and lady-like demeanour of Lady Sophia Lee satisfied him that whatever feelings *she* might entertain towards him, her sentence was not for “*open war*.” —When he made his appearance as usual in Lady Rawleigh’s box at the Opera, Frederica received him without embarrassment, but without emprossement;—made no effort to amuse or detain him;—and left his conversation wholly at Mrs. Erskyne’s disposal, who seemed well satisfied to turn it to good account. But this easy self-possession was far more attractive and perplexing to a man accustomed like Calder to the arts and caprices of her sex, than the most flighty airs of pique and coquetry. He knew not how to deal with her relapse into the listless tranquillity of indifference; but was more than ever stimulated to overcome the stubborn simplicity of so artless a character.

It is generally asserted that men of dissipated habits entertain a pretty universal contempt for the female sex. But this

is a gross misrepresentation. A dissipated man, unless degraded by unusual stupidity of nature, possesses a peculiar tact for distinguishing a woman whose conduct and sentiments are really unexceptionable, and at once entertains a holy reverence towards herself and them. Lord Calder had never misjudged Lady Rawleigh, even in her unguarded encouragement of his advances,—even in the imprudent obligations she had unwittingly contracted in his favour. He saw that he had been indebted for his temporary advantage to some agency the nature of which was inscrutable to his penetration; and he was now satisfied that her eyes had been opened to the true character of his views and feelings, either accidentally or by the interference of an officious friend; and that she had resolved to terminate the connexion as gradually and unostentatiously as the occasion would permit.

There were circumstances, however, which tempted him to hope that she had entangled herself too deeply in his toils to recede without much effort; and as he found it impossible to obtain admission in Bruton-street, or address himself to her at the Opera without danger from the mole-eared vigilance of the malicious Louisa, or even obtain her attention in general society,—where her increasing popularity attracted the homage of half the distinguished young men of the day, he determined on sending out cards for a fancy-ball; or rather a masque of the old school, such as would render Calder House the rendezvous of the whole *grand monde*,—and from whence Lady Rawleigh could scarcely absent herself without some very particular motive or plausible excuse.

Frederica indeed entertained no such intention. Sir Brooke, Lord Launceston, Lady Sophia,—all were included in the invitation; nor had there been anything in Lord Calder's conduct towards her to require their resentment or urge them to renounce the most brilliant fête of the season. In London society it is by no means necessary to feel, or even to affect, the slightest respect or regard for the proprietors of those mansions where we drink our best champagne, or tread our liveliest measures; and more than one member of the fashionable world can boast a visiting list graced by the most illustrious names, and a ball-room crowded by the most distinguished guests, who is thought of and spoken of with personal contempt and disgust.

The characters in the projected masque or tableau, which were distributed by Lord Calder's express interference, were selected from Spenser's Faery Queen; and while Lady Rochester naturally appropriated to herself the dignities of Gloriana, Frederica found the part of the spotless Una humbly tendered to her acceptance. But without even taking counsel with those whose prejudices she knew so well to inter-

pret she immediately despatched a note to Lord Calder, definitely declining any ostensible share in the pageant; but promising to join the circle in some group unconnected with the principal exhibition. On reflection, too, this was a plan which suited better with those of his lordship. He had laid at her feet the highest tribute the occasion afforded; and was sensible that her society would be more at his own disposal if unfettered by an arbitrary part in the drama.

All London—in which phrase are included some five hundred persons, the elect of fashion, who regard all other castes as issued from the feet of Brahma instead of their own dignified source of origin—the head of the false divinity,—*all London* was now excited to the highest pitch of frivolous eagerness for the event! Artists of every denomination,—painters, sculptors, and poets,—authorities of every calibre, from the British Museum to Dandy Colnaghi's portfolios,—were laid under contribution; and select committees appointed in divers dwellings of the young and beautiful.—Strings of pearls were tried in profusion among clusters of equally redundant ringlets, before many a gorgeous mirror; and Persian pantoufles fitted on many a foot worthy to elicit the raptures bestowed by Rousseau on those of Madame D'Houdetot. Bribes were mysteriously dispensed to the forewomen of Triaud and Duchon, that they might do their spiriting secretly as well as gently; and many a fair exclusive continued to lisp her declarations that “upon her honour she could not make up her mind with respect to her costume,” many days after the said costume had been snugly deposited in the armoire of her dressing-room. Lord George was perplexing the snip of the Opera-house with “diwectionth for his Pet-waach dweth,”—and was in agonies under the impending horror of having Lady Margaret Fieldham forced on his acceptance as his “*fera, mansueta e bella*.” General Lorrison proposed accompanying his nephew as Cardinal Colonna, crowned with a hat resembling a scarlet champignon;—Louisa Erskyne had manœuvred herself into the part rejected by Frederica;—while Lord Putney promised to enact one of her lions, provided she could persuade Traveller Broughley to roar as his comrade.

It was within a week of this elaborate festival, when one morning Lord Launceston sauntered into Frederica's drawing-room, to inquire at what hour he was to accompany Lady Sophia and herself in their daily ride;—and had the satisfaction to find Sir Brooke lounging over the Quarterly Review, as contentedly as he had ever done at Rawleighford, and to discover,—although his arrival produced sundry diatribes on the heat of the weather as an excuse for this uxorious domestication,—that his brother was in fact breaking through

an engagement with Mr. Lexley, in order to enjoy the society of his Frederica.

"I want to engage you in my service," said the latter, as Sir Brooke hurried away to his toilet to prepare for the execution of this neglected duty. "We cannot make up our Pirate group for Calder House without your assistance."

"I am sorry for that,—for I have not the least thought of adding to the congregation of blockheads to be assembled on that occasion."

"But my dear William you promised from the first to be of our party."

"Did I?—Then I did not know what I was talking of;—or perhaps I pleaded the invitation to escape a tea-party at old grandmother Derenzy's, or a little commission to step down to Broadstairs to hire a Lodging for Lady Olivia."

"No! you promised to go, simply to oblige your sister; and I positively will not let you off unless you have some real, right-down, positive engagement with Miss Waddlestone to interfere with my claims!"

"Real, right-down, positive engagement with Leonora!" reiterated Lord Launceston. "It seems to me as if my destiny decreed me to be engaged on all occasions to the whole world, and always in my own despute. But seriously, dearest Fred., you must excuse my attendance at Calder House;—I am so miserably out of spirits just now, that I am not prepared to carry an extra load of absurdity; I can play no part but that of a repining, irresolute, and unhappy man."

"I trust, dearest Launceston," said Frederica affectionately, "that your affairs—"

"Are not, just now, my bitterest grievance, although in a most dilapidated condition. No! Fred.!—I have resolved to let Marston,—since the fates forbid my deliverance by selling it;—to go abroad, retrench, grow mad and desperate; and either calcine myself geologizing in the crater of Vesuvius; or go to sleep in a snow-drift on the Grand Mulet. I am tired of this life of imposture and monotony;—and I will leave you, dearest, to inherit my estates, and pay off my mortgages, and make my apologies to Lady Mary Trevelyan."

"I rejoice to perceive that you are not *quite* in earnest;—that like other young gentlemen in debt and in love, you are only a little hypochondriacal this morning."

"It is a very provoking thing," cried Lord Launceston, growing half angry, "that I never can persuade any one I am in earnest. There have I been sitting these two hours with my mother, threatening to take a dose of morphine or Prussic acid without consulting Camomile, unless she afforded me a certain piece of intelligence which I demanded at her hands:—and she actually sat listening to me, and

smiling over her chocolate, as if I had menaced myself with a cup of water-gruel!"

"Which intelligence was doubtless the residence of Miss Elbany's family,—or at least the actual place of her retreat?—It does not require the art of a wizard to detect the motive of your despondency."

"Perhaps *you* will be more merciful, Frederica, and let me into the secret?"

"I?—I must possess a wondrous skill in divination to penetrate into the mysteries of such a child of the mist as your fair friend."

"But possibly Rawleigh may have given you intelligence on the subject?"

"What interest or information can *he* possess concerning an obscure advertising 'Companion to a lady of quality'?—Depend on it Rawleigh knows and cares as little about the young lady as I do."

"You never were more mistaken!—He was constantly cloistered with her in Charles-street; and I have every reason to believe they had a long interview on the very morning of her departure."

"Indeed!" said Frederica reddening with emotion, which a single moment's reflection on the absurdity of her former suspicions fortunately enabled her to subdue. "But why do you not make your inquiries of Wrightson, who accompanied Miss Lucy in her expedition?"

"I have,—I did;—but as I could neither offer a bribe to a worthy woman who was present at my birth, nor cudgel her on conviction of having given me false information, where was the use of my inquiries?"

"Poor good old Wrightson is incapable of misleading any one."

"I found her very capable of misleading *me*. I suspected, indeed, from a sly glance of the old traitress's eye under her spectacles, that she was will-of-the-wisping me with her story of 'the pleasant little village of Wansfield, near Lewes; and Miss's uncle being curate; and Miss being sent for to meet an old aunt from Maderia!'"

"And did it really turn out to be a Crackskull-Common romance of my son Tony's?" inquired Lady Rawleigh, laughing in spite of herself at her brother's half comic,—half indignant air.

"Nothing less, on my honour!—I was idiot enough to set off in the mail, and waste three days in hunting out this Utopian 'pleasant little village of Wansfield' throughout the county of Sussex!—From Lewes they passed me like a parish vagrant to Winfield;—from Battle to Wentsfield; from Horsham to Walfield; in short I was obliged to con-

fees my defeat on every *field* of those verdant pastures of Wessex."

"Poor fellow!—I should like to have been present when you upbraided your Charles-street enemies on your return."

"No—no! although I acknowledge myself to *you* as a conquered knight, believe me my pride preserved me from the spectacle of their triumph. My mother has not the least conjecture of my wild-goose expedition;—nor that I am more interested in Miss Elbany's exits and entrances than in those of Chloe."

"And why should you imagine Rawleigh less indifferent?" hesitated Frederica, bending over the frame in which she was diligently weaving the Iris-like glories of a macaw with a cherry in its beak, for the merino cushion of her mother's bergère.

"I have already given you reasons sufficient to satisfy a rational being; in addition to which I shall only observe that on the day of Lucy's journey (*you* were at Ash Bank, and *I* was executing commissions for Lady Sophia Lee), Sir Brooke passed the whole morning condoling with our respectable parent; and when I broke in upon them they were engaged in a discussion which had actually brought tears into the eyes of both."

Lady Rawleigh blushed when the possibility occurred to her mind that this family argument might have turned upon the levity, or seeming levity, of a wife and daughter sacredly dear to the hearts of the disputants; and in order to escape the little flying twinges of conscience which, like those of the gout, are useless, unless concentrated into a decided fit, she returned to the subject of the *bal costumé*.

"Then you are absolutely determined to absent yourself from Lord Calder's fête?"

"My dear sister, you know I have always hated buffooneries of that description; I was never intended for a London man. I like a dinner-party or a moderate circle of friends, where one may talk or be talked to without exciting speculation and quizzery,—or a country-house filled with a well-assorted party. But as to those glaring ball-rooms, where you flock in mobs to show your finery, and live in terror of the sneers of your acquaintance, I cannot describe the ludicrous and vexatious associations they produce in my mind. I have never found myself in possession of sufficient industry or sufficient idleness—(and I assure you both are required for the pursuit)—to form connexions and friendships among the motley tribes of fashionable life; and standing as I do apart amid the throng, all your mincings, and moppings, and mowings, and manœuvrings,—all your affected raptures and *impromptus fait à loisir*,—all your laborious smiles and forced

animation,—your manufactured conversations and factitious friendships,—appear to me like the ill-played drama of a company of strollers. I have looked round me sometimes at Almack's, without being able to discover a single person appearing in a natural character, or acting without some latent motive."

"Now you are beginning to overcharge your picture and I am satisfied; none but a weak argument requires the support of caricature. Granting, however, that your satires possess some general truth, why should you concentrate them against this one unlucky party?"

"And in what assumed guise does your ladyship intend to render night hideous on the occasion?" said Lord Launceston, perceiving from Frederica's earnestness that she was really desirous of his company.

"I mentioned to Lord Calder last night at the Duchess of Draxfield's, that I had some idea of making up a group from the Pirate, provided I could persuade Lady Sophia to lend me her flaxen hair and azure eyes in the part of Brenda.—Her's is the true Saxon character of beauty."

"Why don't you make her Rowena then at once,—and exhibit your own jetty curls as Rebecca!—in which case I will be Isaac the Jew at your bidding."

"No!—no!—Rawleigh has not a sufficiently chivalrous air for Ivanhoe; and the Hebrew maiden is represented as a paragon of loveliness. Minna Troil claims no such superiority; and while Lady Sophia and myself profit by the opportunity to economize our costume in all the Zetland simplicity of a few ells of Tartan, Sir Brooke would make a very respectable Mordaunt Merton; and *you*, Launceston, with your dishevelled curls, form an admirable representative of the dauntless Cleveland."

"Thus spake the rover  
To his gallant crew,  
Up with the black flag,  
Down with the blue!"

cried Launceston, after a rapid discomposure of his raven locks. Then sinking back on the sofa and resuming his former listless tone, he observed,—“No—no!—I am not up to the thing.”

“But believe me ‘the thing’ requires no such tact and trouble as you anticipate. I shall not even attempt to add the pleasantries of ‘glorious John’ to our group, unless the Duke of Draxfield persists in joining us; and as to a Norna, I would on no account attract attention by recruiting so prominent a personage.”

"All you mean to do, in short," said her brother provokingly, "is to simper through the suite at Calder House in a somewhat uglier gown than usual;—while Lady Sophia as the lilt-white Brenda

Seems by her dusky guide, like morning led by night."

"Just so!—and as you decline affording us the sanction of your expressive countenance to qualify our monotony, I suppose I must accept Lord Calder's offer of his nephew, Mr. Rockingham, who will complete our group in the character of the Pirate."

"What an odious thing to be dependant on a rich and arbitrary uncle!" cried Lord Launceston. "Calder positively talks of lending you that poor boy as if he were an operaticket, or the volume of a new novel!"

"I wish he were anything half so amusing!—However, the gallant Alfred is remarkably good-looking, and will show well as a Buccaneer."

"Well—well!" said Launceston, rising from his seat as his brother-in-law entered, whom he had promised to accompany as far as Westminster, "if you can prevail on Lady Sophia to convert her Minerva majesty into the nothingness of the daughter of Magnus Troil, I am at all risks for your coolery."

Glad to have accomplished her purpose, whether through the influence of her brother's vanity or good nature, Frederica wished them good-bye with the intention of profiting by their absence to try the effect of her eloquence on Lady Sophia; and the last words she heard addressed by her husband to Lord Launceston as they quitted the room together, were, "Can you recommend me a good footman!—Frederica's man,—that tall, active-looking fellow, Thomas, whom you used to patronize at Rawleighford,—is off at a moment's warning, and leaves me in a most uncomfortable plight. The man's mother is dying,—and you know one could not detain him under such circumstances."

## CHAPTER VIII.

Quoth she "for many years he drove  
A kind of broking trade in love."

RUDIBRAS.

LADY RAWLEIGH's grand with her friend prospered both worse and better than she expected. On her arrival at General Lee's new residence in Curzon-street, she found Lady Derenzy in the last clause of a very prolonged morning visit, and had the satisfaction of finding herself greeted by that stately piece of mechanism, with very flattering cordiality; a circumstance the more important, as her ladyship's measure of esteem was at all times beyond the powers of calculation or anticipation even of her nearest friends. She was one of those persons so difficult to deal with in the commerce of social life, who leave you in a fever of tenderness one day and meet you again on the next below the freezing point of utter ungraciousness; who favour you with a note of invitation framed in all the earnestness and warmth of hospitality, and receive you with as formal a distance as if you were a poor relation, or labouring under flagrant personal disrepute. In the present instance her ladyship's augmentation of regard for the wife of her nephew arose from having heard the intimacy of her liaison with the Calder and Rochester set very maliciously blamed by Miss Harcourt, Lady Lavinia Lisle, and several ancient spinsters of her own circle.

On the occasion of Frederica's marriage Lady Derenzy had calculated that the influence of her high connexions would extricate Sir Brooke from his humdrum habits and undistinguished position in society, and initiate him into the vortex of the great world; and she was proportionably disappointed on recognizing Lady Rawleigh's taste for the domesticities of private life, and on discovering the odious relationship into which she was likely to be forced by the indiscretion of her spendthrift brother. But on learning from the voice of rumour, or the lisps of Lord George, that the fête at Calder House was supposed to be given in her honour,—and that the Rochesters, Guéménées, and Axeters considered her the most elegant woman in London,—Sophronia was ready to forgive all her delinquences real or implied. Backed by the admiration of such a coterie, she would not have been tempted wholly to discard her lovely niece, had Lord Launceston's

marriage actually appeared among the announcements of the *Morning Post*;—while Frederica remained threatened with the loss of character by her intimacy with a man of so much distinction and influence as Lord Calder, her husband's haughty kinswoman considered it her duty to support her in society by an increased degree of favour and protection.

"I am very glad to leave Sophia in your hands, my dear Lady Rawleigh," said she, as she rose to take leave, "for I trust your influence will induce her to coincide with General Lee's desire that she should make a brilliant appearance at this entertainment of Lord Calder's."

"Let me trust so too!" cried Frederica as she closed the door,—having purposely forbore to detain Lady Derenzy by more than the most trivial reply of assent, and now hastening to seat herself beside her friend. "I am come for that very purpose."

"*Et tu Brute?* I had some hopes of enlisting you on my side. Now pray do not suppose, my dearest Lady Rawleigh, that I am like a whimsical woman of fashion,—courting your persuasion to do the thing I like."

"But you often assure me you are a rake at heart;—that you prefer society to solitude;—that you have a decided taste for brilliant crowds, and all the stir and excitement of the gay world."

"A most decided one, Frederica! But not without exceptions in the mode of their enjoyment. I am passionately fond of riding; but I have no pleasure in mounting a vicious horse,—I am—"

"*You are*—wholly incomprehensible! You have already acknowledged to me that you detest Lady Rochester,—but nothing wherefore; and you confess by implication that you cherish an equal abhorrence of Lord Calder. Now although he is not,—has not been,—never will be,—the object of tender affection to me which one of my intimate friends—a Dynley, a Thornton, or an Erskyne—once assured you, I own I am curious to know whence arises your prejudices against so very agreeable a person;—a person whom I should be inclined to point out as endowed with all the tact, brilliancy, and high breeding, calculated to captivate your fancy."

"Were I to explain its motives I should be tempted into a long tiresome story;—valuable as the advertisements say, to no person but the owner."

"Valuable to me, if you will intrust it to my keeping."

"The *Edinburgh Review* assures us that people in real life never communicate their personal reminiscences; and, of course I bow to so erudite an authority."

"But fancy yourself a heroine in right earnest!—imagine me your Norah in white dimity,—and sing or say without re-

serve all your grievances against poor Lord Calder. Come! —I will wind off this skein of netting silk while you are consulting the tablets of your memory."

"You fool me to the top of my bent!" replied Lady Sophia laughing. "What children we are, that a word, or a look, or a ludicrous association can make us jest upon the heaviest tragedies of life!—Here am I—on the point of recounting with a smile facts which have wrung the bitterest tears from my eyes."

"Nay! now you excite my interest rather than my curiosity."

"Be satisfied, Frederica,—I will disappoint neither the one nor the other. I may, however, at least be spared the infliction or endurance of such tediousness as,

My name's Sophia!—at the Austrian court  
My sire despatches scrawled!—

I dare say my cousin Brooke profited by some long winter evening to acquaint you that I was Lord Offaley's only daughter,—that I lost my mother in my cradle,—became a peevish self-willed child,—and grew to be a torment to myself and all belonging to me."

"By no means; he only acquainted me with a misdemeanor to which you have yourself pleaded guilty,—a certain negligence of the purity of the marble vestibules at Twickenham."

"Although I was but a girl in those days,—for Rawleigh and I were only approximated under Lord P. during the period of our syntax and prose—then advanced far beyond his comprehension;—four years older than your husband; and a lady bewildered in a maze of fine sentiment, who, being aware of his own insufficiency to direct and control my impetuous character, turned me over to his beloved sister, Sophronia; and most assuredly no preceptor of her sex could be better endowed for the act of taming down an unquiet spirit. I am persuaded Lady Derenzy could have broken in Mazeppa's fiery courser by mere word of mouth."

"But what effect had her skill on the fierceness of Lady Sophia Rhyse?"

"More than might have been expected. Her opposition amused me beyond description. I have always been a sort of amateur in my waywardness; and having been accustomed from my childhood to indulge in all the wilful vagaries of a spoiled child, it was something quite new and diverting to me to cope with a will that opposed my own. When

Derenzy used to direct my amazed attendant to conduct Lady Sophia to her own apartment till she came to her senses, I marked my penitence by standing still to laugh at the novelty of the invention. But it is not my intention to favour you with namby-pamby reminiscences of my white-frock days : I will convey you straight to the happy moment of my departure from the clock-work monotony of the Derenzy establishment ; when at the buoyant, sanguine, joyous age of seventeen, I was summoned to preside over my father's ambassadorial household, and to enter the lists of fashionable life."

**"A charming epoch for a person of Lady Sophia Rhyse's impetuous character."**

1. The first of these is the fact that the  
 2. second of these is the fact that the  
 3. third of these is the fact that the  
 4. fourth of these is the fact that the  
 5. fifth of these is the fact that the  
 6. sixth of these is the fact that the  
 7. seventh of these is the fact that the  
 8. eighth of these is the fact that the  
 9. ninth of these is the fact that the  
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to the ...  
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to the ...

[illegible][illegible]

full-grown,—full-minded,—dry,—hard,—rational,—debating,—legislating,—calculating man, who preferred a trumpety violet to an oak tree capable of being sold at so much per foot,—surely we may allow a moment—(the world will take care that it does not last too long)—for the indulgence of natural feelings, and the unchecked delusions of the soul ?”

“You are the last person in the world,” cried Lady Rawleigh, “from whom I should have expected a tirade in praise of sensibility.”

“Because the world,—I thank its tender mercies,—has clad me in complete steel against any relapse of the disorder.—Besides it is a distemper of extreme youth, and would as ill-become me now as the chincough. Still, although I am not at all ashamed to avow that I have *passé par là*, do not imagine, my gentle coz., that I ever condescended to perform the part of a Lydia Languish, or to amuse myself with sighing away my sorrows on the banks of the Arno. I only wish to forewarn you that I entered upon life unguarded by any precocious philosophy;—that I was just as well inclined to believe that ‘words were things,’—that those who spoke me fairly meant me kindly,—that there was warmth in the sunshine and safety on the wave,—as any other young lady of my age, who is subjected to hear herself assured, at all hours, in all languages, that she is an angel; and to find her every action and thought regarded with admiration by a doting father. I was neither quite a fool nor quite an ignoramus, it is true; but my studies at Twickenham had been wholly literary,—I knew nothing of the world, and fancied I knew wonders;—in short, my dear Frederica, I was as promising a subject for a dupe, as Moses Primrose or Wilhelm Meister.”

“But surely you were not left wholly to your own guidance;—surely you were not allowed at ‘sweet seventeen’ to do the honours of the embassy?”

“Not precisely.—There was a Mrs. Mansel, a sort of demi-semi dame de compagnie, the widow of an officer, who, at my father’s desire, had accompanied me from England; and who, by Lady Derenzy’s discernment had been selected for the office from her gentle inanity of mind and body, in order to prevent her from becoming a dangerous companion—not to me—but to my father. And yet Lord Offaley, as you have probably heard, was a man of highly cultivated mind, absorbed by his public duties and abstruse studies, who was very unlikely to have fallen in love with anything less ethereal than Carlo Dolce’s representation of *La Poesia*;—and who did not even apply his observation to sublunary things sufficiently to perceive that his daughter was full fathom-five in love,—and that Mrs. Mansel was looking on with as vague

and inquisitorial an eye as if she had been only a painted emblem of a duenna!"

"In love!" reiterated Frederica. "Now your narrative begins indeed to overstep the modesty of the 'white-frock days.' The romance of your history began betimes."—

"So it should ever do, that it may end before the commencement of the matter-of-fact business of life. But guess, Frederica,—and save me the labour of an attempt at a blush,—guess the name of its hero?"

"How can I possibly conjecture by what conjunction of

Syllables that breathe of the sweet south,

your Tuscan adorer was distinguished;—Borghese, Belgiojoso, Bretadignelli—."

"Pshaw!—do you really suppose me so missish as to be captivated by nothing beneath a principality?—No,—with all the charm that Italy assumed in my eyes, it was the land, and not the dwellers on it, which moved my predilection. No woman of feeling and delicacy, admitted as I was behind the curtain of the *ménage* in their villas and palaces, would endure the thought of similar domestication."

"I have always heard that there was a great deal of penury and filth hid under the superficial splendour of those foreign magnats," said the literal Frederica.

"Mental penury, and moral filth,—the worst of social evils! But not to digress into a dissertation on the manners and customs of the Italians, or rather to return to my own which are of course far more important in my eyes, know that even then I held the opinion I have never since resigned, that a well-educated English gentleman is the most refined and accomplished of the male creation.—This doctrine, Frederica, is general and comprehensive:—its peculiar example was embodied in the person of your friend—"

"Lord Calder!" exclaimed Lady Rawleigh, her eyes sparkling with the detection of the mystery. "I thought so!"

"Not quite, but *à peu près*!—I should have said your friend's friend—his *double*—"

"Not that odious, hypocritical Mr. Vaux!" again interrupted Frederica.

"Not the hypocritical Mr. Vaux, certainly, but his precursor;—the boy who was father to the man!—The stripling of five-and-twenty and the polished man of the world at forty—and one, are two very different beings."

"Not in every instance, I trust," observed Frederica, in a low tone. "I should grieve to think that sixteen years hence Rawleigh would become so strangely altered."

"Brooke Rawleigh at forty—fifty—a hundred-and-one if you please, will always remain the same excellent straightforward personage he is to day;—but *he* runs no danger of becoming a man of the world! When Mr. Vaux visited Florence, he had just left Oxford, having distinguished himself sufficiently to render his name known to my father,—and was proceeding on the grand tour under the combined advantages of a good person, good abilities, good fortune, and good introductions; but the charms he soon discovered in Florence, or, to speak it without affectation, in the smiles of Lady Sophia Rhyse, and the society of Lord Offaley, induced him to anchor himself in the Arno for the remainder of the winter. To my father, indeed, he was a great acquisition. Our secretary was a piece of estimable diplomatic lumber;—a thing wound up to go through its accustomed duties without demur or delay, or an idea of its own; and our attachés were a tribe of school-boy honourables, who fortunately made their way too well in the households of the foreign magnats we were talking of, to inflict their nothingness upon ours. Mr. Vaux, meanwhile, was unexceptionable in his address,—a young man of cultivated mind and manners;—graceful, insinuating, and although courted in the best society in the place, always to be found at the embassy."

"Or as you observed just now—(to speak it without affectation)—always at the feet of Lady Sophia Rhyse."

"Like other anticipators, you invariably overshoot the mark!—He was *not* at my feet,—and was even especially cautious not to place himself there; but he was constantly by my side, and had every excuse for the propinquity; being incessantly invited by my father,—incessantly welcomed by myself. Mrs. Mansel was my constant companion; but her presence, whether ghostly or bodily, formed no restraint on our intercourse. In my box at the Opera she sat with her glassy eyes riveted on the 104th representation of the *Tancredi*, with the same vague immobility it had elicited on its first night; and in our walks and drives never could I perceive that she saw or heard more of our proceedings than the idle wind which passed us by. Meanwhile, those proceedings were fraught with peril to *one* at least of the party. Friedrich Vaux and I were sharing together that bewildering dream of first attachment which leaves the remainder of life a blank. Without distinctly uttering the words 'I love,' there was nothing *but* love in all our arguments,—our meetings and partings,—our disagreements and reconciliations,—our thoughts and looks."

"And what then prevented the utterance of that 'open Sesame' of the heart, which would have consecrated such looks and thoughts?"

"At that period I never paused to inquire. I knew that after the fashion of English wooing, marriage is preceded by courtship,—courtship by an unacknowledged probation of love;—and I found its doubts and fears and sublimities far too delightful to be anxious for the abridgment of this first stage of exquisite purgatory; or, to own the truth, I never reflected at all on the subject. In Vaux's absence I thought only of the moment of meeting him again; and when he *was* again by my side, I knew and felt nothing but that I was the happiest creature in the world!—No! it is not in words to define a more exclusive devotion than mine to that selfish, heartless man!"

Lady Sophia paused for a moment, as if absorbed by her own recollections; but on perceiving an air of sympathy in Lady Rawleigh's countenance, she suddenly resumed her natural animation.

"Well, Frederica,—not to waste too much pathos on a sterile subject,—this same delightful winter passed rapidly away; my father, whose habits were those of the most splendid profusion, upheld the dignity of the embassy by a series of princely entertainments, at which Vaux was considered less as a guest than as a child of the house; and although I experienced the contrariety of opening our weekly ball with some man of higher distinction, I was sure to find him at the breakfast table on the following morning, discussing Greek epigrams with Lord Offaley till poor Mansel's eyes expanded beyond the dimensions of the tea-cups over which she was presiding. And yet the winter expired without any better understanding among us.—Instead of departing for Rome and Naples, as he had originally projected, Mr. Vaux satisfied himself with a six weeks' visit to the baths at Lucca, during which period a miserable vacuum was perceptible to the mind of his excellency, and the heart of his excellency's daughter; and when on his return he was invited to pass the autumn at our delicious casino, I know not which appeared the happiest of the three. I will spare you, however, the twilight and the moonlight, the Arno, the orange-blossoms, the vintage, and all the poeticisms of the case; and acknowledge that when we settled once more in the city for the winter months, even I had begun to think it strange that Mr. Vaux was not yet my declared lover."

"Perhaps his circumstances—"

"Exactly so!—I had some how or other discovered that his estate amounted to no more than fifteen hundred a-year;—my father's, I knew, was estimated at as many thousands;—and in my ignorance of the world, I settled it with myself that Vaux had not courage to tender so poor a pittance to the heiress of Lord Offaley. From that moment my pride

repressed the professions of disinterested unworldliness I had been accustomed to utter in his presence;—I thought every declaration of humility appeared like meeting his scruples half way. Sometimes, indeed, he seemed on the point of overcoming them without any such encouragement; when just as my hour of happiness was approaching, the fates decreed that a Lord Ellersby and a Mr. Dynley should make their entrance on the scene.”

“The present Lord Lawford, and Lady Barbara’s husband?”

“Precisely!—Lord Ellersby was a good-natured fashionable young man, who travelled to get rid of himself or his time, and thought both one and the other as well bestowed on the ambassador’s daughter as on the Venus of the Tribune; while Mr. Dynley, as a species of gentlemanly toady, fancied he escaped the charge of hanging on and tuft-hunting, because he concealed his meanness under a braggadocia air, and had courage to say insolent things to the man whose table and carriage he laid under contribution. He was, in fact, the same cynical, overbearing, supercilious person you see him now; but unfortunately he had another qualification,—he was Vaux’s Oxford and Eton friend!—From the first day of his appearance at the embassy, where by the way he was warmly welcomed in this latter capacity by my father, I conceived an insurmountable prejudice against him. Vaux, in our *villeggiatura* season, had taught me German,—in return for which I bestowed the name of Mephistophiles on his bosom friend; a piece of flippancy which, with the genuine treachery of his sex he communicated to Dynley, and our dislike became reciprocal. Had Rawleigh a Pylades, Frederica?—if so, you are probably aware of the danger of making an enemy of one’s lover’s bosom friend.”

“Mrs. Martha Derenzy was Sir Brooke’s Patroclus,” said her companion; “and we began, and have continued a system of mutual regard.”

“Poor old soul!—there is no more malice in *her* bosom than in a buttered muffin.”

“I can imagine, however, that there was not a similar deficiency in the heart of that hideous Mr. Dynley.”

“And yet, with all his courteous hatred of me, he could not manage to prevent Lord Ellersby from—but hark!—I hear General Lee’s step in the other room.—You must suspend your curiosity till to-morrow.”

“Not if you will come and take a drive with me to Colville’s.”

“You know we are engaged to ride together at five; and I do not like to leave the General alone for so many hours.”

Frederica recollected with regret her former ungenerous suspicions on that very point.

"But you will promise me the remainder of your Life and Times during our ride?"

"On no account! I do not like your brother half well enough to improve his young mind at my own expense. But if you will let me off the riding party, for which I am not quite in spirits, I will call for you this evening when the general goes to his club;—I have the Duke of Draxfield's box for Drury-lane; and we will finish our commérage in a tête-à-tête. Where are you going to night?"

"Only to the Guéménées;—we can be home to dress by eleven, which will suit me perfectly."

## CHAPTER IX.

Heaven, when it strives to polish all it can  
 Its last best work, but forms a softer man;  
 Picks from each sex to make the favourite blest,  
 Your love of pleasure, our desire of rest;  
 Blends in exception to all general rules,  
 Your taste for follies, with our scorn of fools;  
 Reserve with frankness, art with truth allied,—  
 Courage with softness, modesty with pride,  
 Fixed principles with fancy ever new.—

POPE.

"I HAVE been quite tired out this morning by Lexley and his legislative crew;" observed Sir Brooke Rawleigh, as he pledged Frederica in a glass of sherry soon after the commencement of dinner. "He is such an unmerciful magnifier of atoms, such an umpire of the frogs and mice, such an emphasizer upon nothings, that one loses one's time and patience in his service. I think I shall skip the house to-night, and pass a quiet evening with you in Charles-street."

"You offer me a strong temptation to break through my engagements," replied his wife reddening to the temples: "but I have promised to accompany Lady Sophia to the play. She is to call for me with the General about eight. Perhaps," continued Frederica, with a conscious look, for she really wished to enjoy a tête-à-tête with a friend; "perhaps you would like to accompany us?—We have the Duke of Draxfield's box."

But Sir Brooke, vexed to find his little domestic project thus provokingly forestalled, now took it into his head to be affronted that the scheme was only thus casually unfolded to him. "I am obliged to you," he replied, somewhat drily, "but I should think that General Lee, Lady Sophia, and yourself, like John Gilpin's family—'would fill the chaise;'"—and it would not suit me like the doughty draper to 'ride a horseback after ye.'"

"But you could find your way to us," said Lady Rawleigh, coldly.

"No!—on the whole it would suit me better to find my way to the Alfred. I am a week in arrear with the newspapers! and from Albermarle-street I can look in for the close of the debate, and save my character."

"As you please.—There is nothing very promising at Drury-lane; and you might possibly have been bored."

"Who have you of your party?" inquired Sir Brooke, carelessly helping himself to a cutlet, although his plate was already fully supplied.

"Not a soul!—Lady Sophia and I have made an agreement to be quite alone, that we may decide the mighty matter of our dresses for Calder House."

Sir Brooke now appeared more at his ease, and despatched his double portion of cutlets without much effort. Before dessert was placed on the table, Lady Sophia was announced to be in waiting; and Frederica in her simple morning dress was immediately handed to the carriage by her husband. After depositing General Lee at his club, they proceeded to the theatre; and were no sooner comfortably installed in their arm-chair, beyond reach of interruption from the unmeaning melo-drama which was proceeding on the stage, than Lady Rawleigh claimed the promise of her friend to complete her narrative.

"*Shall I go on?*" as Yorick says. Do you know that the routine of dinner and dressing have reduced me to such a conventionalized mood, that I am positively ashamed of my own egotism in commencing the task. Who, in their sober senses, can suppose their personal reminiscences interesting to any other living being?"—

"How!—You who lived for years within chime of the Twickenham ring of bells concerning 'Strawberry Horace,' can you be ignorant of Walpole's aphorism, that every man who will take the trouble of describing in simple language the scenes of which he has been a spectator, can afford an instructive and amusing narrative?"

"A man, perhaps,—whose life is animated by action!—But a woman's existence consists in her feelings,—and mere feelings are too individual and too selfish to excite much sympathy. Between yours and mine, however, my dear Frederica, there is sufficient analogy to bespeak some interest; and I will therefore trust to your probity that you have not, *par complaisance*, invited me into details which you do not care to hear.—Where was I?—In much love, and much perplexity, if I recollect."

"You had brought Mr. Dynley and Lord Ellersby to Florence; and had given me reason to prognosticate an adorer in the one and enemy in the other."

"Well recollected, Fred.!—you really encourage me to proceed: you were not half so nearly asleep this morning as I conjectured."

"Nor you so much in earnest!—for I was induced to be-

lieve your attachment to Mr. Vaux a serious affair ;—and yet you now allude to it with levity !”

“Do I !” said Lady Sophia, with an irrepressible shudder. “Then my words belie my feelings ; for during ten long desolate years that man and his shallow treachery preyed upon my heart ! I cannot tell you, Frederica, with what surprise, what bewilderment, what gradually-awakening anguish, I perceived how pointedly he withdrew his attentions in order to make way for those of Lord Ellersby, and how plainly he evinced his desire that I should become the wife of another !—I had no advisers ;—Mrs. Mansel was a goose ;—my father would probably have followed up my confidence on such a subject by offering to countersign Mr. Vaux’s passport for the pursuance of his southern tour ; and young as I was, I should have shrunk from taking counsel with the married women by whom I was surrounded, whose practice afforded so vile a sample of their principles. Clear-sighted enough in their case, the conduct of Mr. Vaux fairly baffled my penetration. I was convinced that previous to Dynley’s arrival the sincerity of his attachment had equalled its tenderness ; and now began to imagine that the libertine example of his friend alone disposed him against the restraints of a married life. Sometimes, too, I fancied that the delicacy of his scruples forbade him to interpose his personal influence between the brilliant prospects afforded me by an union with Lord Ellersby.”

“You believed him, in short, as honest and disinterested as yourself.”—

“Disinterested I truly was,—but in point of honesty, I can say little in my own praise ; for the result of my cogitations was a resolution—a genuine feminine resolution—to quicken the pulse of Vaux’s diminished passion by a little jealousy. Having satisfied my conscience by a self-assurance that the noble tourist was afflicted with a measure of sensibility exactly commensurate with that of a Colchester oyster, and that he devoted his homage to me only because I happened to be the finest lady in Florence, I commenced a violent flirtation with him ; and promoted him to all the distinctions of companionship in riding, dancing, singing, and conversing, which I had formerly bestowed on the recreant scholar of the artful Dynley. *Je n’y gagne pas !*—Lord Lawford is your country neighbour, and you can therefore appreciate his merits as a partner and a companion ; and Frederick, instead of being excited to anything like a jealous rivalry, retreated further and further from the scene of action. I yawned with my new lover in the foreground, while he sighed ostentatiously in the distance.”

“And Dynley ?”

"—Sneered to his heart's content at all three!—Nor was this the worst part of the affair. The violent flirtation was as miscalculated as it was unfeeling on my own part;—I ought not to have done more than coquet with my automaton of a lover; by overacting my manœuvre, I rendered it worse than useless. Poor Lord Ellersby, deceived by the encouragement of my smiles, hastened to offer his proposals to my father; and one fine morning when I went to make my daily salutations to Lord Offaley, I found him in his library, making calculations on the back of a letter, and looking at once pleased and mortified. He congratulated me on having secured so respectable and brilliant a position as that of Countess of Lawford; even while an air of vexation clouded his brow at the prospect of consigning his darling child to the arms of a blockhead!"

"Lord Offaley did not then so much as revert to the possibility of rejection?"—

"How should he?—He had seen me welcome with the utmost courtesy those fulsome attentions which I now assured him were revolting to me:—had seen me court the declaration I was now half inclined to resent as an insult."

"And of course reproached you with your previous hypocrisy?"

"No!—my dear father could see or imagine no fault in *his* daughter half so heinous. He conceived my inconsistency to arise at worst from the inherent caprice of my sex; and as such, reproved it with all the forbearing gentleness of his nature. Having listened with patience to my request that he would immediately and definitively decline the overtures of my unfortunate dupe, he added, 'The circumstances being now at an end, Sophy, which could afford undue importance in your eyes to such a piece of intelligence,—since you have absolutely refused an offer which would have secured your future independence,—I think it right, my dear child, to apprise you that my brother necessarily inherits, with my title, all my entailed estates;—that my expenses through life have unfortunately equalled my income; and that,—unless a prolongation of my appointment here should enable me to appropriate a fund to your future benefit, your mother's fortune of ten thousand pounds is all I shall be able to bequeath you. Let not, however, this limited portion influence your views in the choice of an alliance. Should I die to-morrow, my dearest Sophia would not be left destitute:—my sister Derenzy has solemnly engaged to afford her the protection of a comfortable home.'"

"Such, then, after all, was the paltry—the degrading motive of Mr. Vaux's reserve!"

"Alas! alas! Frederica!—judge what tears of bitterness

enlightenment on such a point must have wrung from my heart!—I grieve to recollect that my sudden burst of sorrow was attributed by my poor father to displeasure at his thoughtless improvidence, rather than to a painful sense of my own humiliation; nor could I undeceive him by a frank representation of the conflict in my heart. My simple assurances sufficed to remove his unpleasant impression,—for persons of a generous mind are always susceptible of a generous interpretation of the views of others; but as I was leaving the room to conceal in solitude my wounded feelings and swollen eyes, he abruptly recalled me. ‘One more word on this unsatisfactory subject, Sophia,’ said he, ‘before we dismiss it for ever. I trust I have no reason for apprehending that any other attachment—that your intimacy with Mr. Vaux,—has influenced your determination against Lord Ellersby?’”

“‘My dear father,’ I replied, evasively and with a beating heart, ‘surely you must have noticed that since his lordship’s arrival Mr. Vaux has been wholly engrossed by his old friend, Mr. Dynley;—that of all the young men who frequent the embassy, no one pays me so little attention; and that his attraction to this house lies exclusively in your society and conversation?’”

“‘So I have always thought, or I should have been more scrupulous in encouraging him by such frequent invitations,’ said Lord Offaley, tranquilly resuming his official pen. ‘Mr. Vaux is a young man of great abilities; and may, if he chooses, win his way to some distinction. But were his birth and fortune thrice as attractive as those of poor Ellersby, I should not experience the slightest hesitation in addressing to him the refusal I am at this moment about to write. Vaux is one of the last men in the world to whom I would confide the happiness of a beloved child’—Frederica!—what do I deserve for having trifled with the credulity of so good—so kind a father?’”

“I know not what punishment to award you; but I conceive that a penance for your sins was very amply supplied in the infatuation of your attachment.”

“You are right!—Surrounded by all that the world calls prosperity,—by a splendid establishment, brilliant position, universal favour, and above all by the doting tenderness of Lord Offaley, my life was in reality a life of penance. I was beginning to feel debased in my own eyes;—I was beginning to experience that indescribable self-recoil of unrequited affection, which turns the springs of nature from milk to gall, and eats into the innermost depths of a repining heart. Amid all the devoted admirers by which my steps were followed, I saw but the one missing truant; amid all the conflicting pleasures and interests of life, I recognized only those which

involved the destiny of Frederick,—of that Frederick by whom I was rejected.”

“And Lord Ellersby?”

“—Quitted Florence on the following day, with a justly-resentful notion that he had been exceedingly ill-used. His absence, as you may imagine, was a considerable relief to my feelings, and the more so that it necessitated Mr. Dynley’s departure. Already I began to flatter myself that perhaps old times might be renewed,—that Vaux, estranged from his evil influence, and evil example, might renounce his worldly wisdom in my favour; but, alas!—I soon recognised my error. They went not alone;—Frederick had been persuaded to join their journey to Naples;—and I had the satisfaction of knowing, in my deserted and desolate solitude, that two at least of the party would enliven their tour by railing against the caprice, and insolence, and all the other faults, both real and imaginary, of the presumptuous Lady Sophia Rhyse.”

“And this vexation you had to undergo unsupported by the counsels or sympathy of a single friend?”

“I cannot boast that my fortitude sustained the trial with very exemplary patience. I became peevish and capricious in good earnest; Mrs. Mansel was secretly convinced that my temper was utterly ruined; and my father openly confessed his apprehensions that my health was gone for ever. I have little doubt that my fair rivals of Florence formed the same opinion touching my beauty, although it was too carefully guarded to reach my ears;—for, to say the truth, I was seriously ill, and my feebleness and wasted figure bore witness to the fact. Had I fallen in love and out of health in England, I should of course have been despatched to Italy for death or recovery;—in Italy, they could recommend me nothing better than “to try my natal air;” or, in other words, return to England, and rescue the physician of the Embassy from the tedious duty of watching over my slow extinction. To England, in short, we came; and had it not been for the morbid and perverse tenacity with which young ladies of eighteen cling to what is called a first attachment, even I might have learned to reconcile my admiration for the character of a British gentleman, with a discovery that Mr. Vaux presented by no means so exclusive a personal copy of the Apollo animated by the philosophy of Bacon, and the wit of Swift, as I had taught myself to fancy. In the elevated society to which I was now introduced by my father’s rank and popularity, I met with half-a-dozen,—with twenty men,—far more deserving my regard by their talents and accomplishments, and in more than one instance by their preference to myself. But I was obstinately bent on being a fool;—piqued

myself on proving as constant as Juliet; and was almost disappointed to find, that instead of pining away into the tomb of all the Offaleys, I gradually recovered my appetite,—rest,—good-looks,—all but my pristine indifference: till my father satisfied to see his dear Sophia resume her health and cheerfulness, quite forgave her obstinacy in refusing two or three as auspicious alliances as ever courted the caprice of a coquette."

"I have heard that, among others, Lord Axeter and the Duke of Whitehaven were at one time at your feet."

"I recognize Lady Derenzy's gossiping genius in the statement!—But *n'importe!*—I did not allow them to remain there long."

"And how long did you linger in this wonderfully efficacious 'natal air?'"

"A year—or more,—long enough to be heartily tired of it and of myself. My father, believing that my indisposition must have arisen from the climate of Tuscany, had sent in his resignation soon after our arrival in England; but not, as it turned out, to his own disadvantage. It chanced that during our stay in the land of parliaments and pugilism, a molten calf of our own kindred was set up in Downing-street, who was sufficiently obliging to nominate his cousin, the Earl of Offaley, to the Austrian mission; and when we quitted England again, it was to exchange the banks of the Arno for those of the Danube. Any prospect of novelty delighted me; but guess what were my feelings when, as we were dining, a few nights previous to our departure, with the foreign secretary, a young Bohemian nobleman invited to meet us as being just arrived from Vienna, observed 'And you will find several of your own countrymen settled there for the winter; among others, a Milor Dinli, and a Milor Vows.'"

"Mr. Dynley, and Mr. Vaux?"

"Exactly!—Mr. Dynley has arranged himself in the *ménage* of my relative Prince Zibrinczki,—or of Madame son épouse, which is nearly the same thing."

"That ugly dog!—I should have thought him the last man on earth to captivate a woman of gallantry,' said our official cousin."

"Ah!" cried the young Bohemian, laughing, 'it is so difficult for men to judge the attractions of their own sex! Dinli is *très bizarre*,—*ce qu'on appelle en Angleterre "ott"*—"*umoriste*,"—and the princess likes him either for his satirical originality,—or as some ladies choose their lapdogs,—for his hideousness.'

"And his friend?—young Vaux, I grant you is a good-looking fellow; and quite calculated for conquest. Surely,

prince, you must mean Mr. Vaux, as the *héros à bonnes fortunes*?" persisted my lord the secretary.

"Ah—no!—on the contrary, Milor Vows is anything but a lady-killer—quite an anchorite, a philosopher by comparison. He lives indeed, with the Zibrinczkis as familiarly as his friend; for it appears *his* business in the drama to divert the prince's attention by prosing about English horses and English agriculture, (my purblind cousin's darling hobbies)—while Dinli spouts Rousseau with Madame la princesse."

"Here was a noble occupation for the idol of my heart!—At least it gave me the pleasure of despising him: and when we arrived at our splendid hotel on the Wohlgraben, and ascertained the exact accuracy of the intelligence I had received respecting these estimable gentlemen, it imparted to my heart all the courage I wanted, in order to receive them at the embassy with the most repellent reserve. To Dynley, I was as chilling as a grand duchess; to his friend I was still worse,—easily and calmly contemptuous. It was now *my* turn to triumph."

"And I trust you did not allow it to escape unimproved, or you were less than true to the cause of your sex!" cried Frederica.

"Alas!—I was only *too* true to its weakness. I so absurdly exaggerated my part, and managed to overwhelm the offender by such an excess of scornful insolence, that I not only drew down the reprehension of my father for my want of courtesy towards one of his favourite guests, but enlisted my own sympathy in his behalf. Many persons of the high society of Vienna, who had waited for my example to form their opinion of my two countrymen, and who conceived from my demeanour towards Mr. Vaux that he was little better than an adventurer, now hastened to emulate my tone of disdain; and we had not been established many weeks, before his position, which was so flattering and agreeable previous to my inopportune arrival, became wholly reversed. He found himself travelling to Coventry by easy stages; and seemed to relish the journey as little as possible."

"Delightful!—just as it should be!"

"Delightful—but just as it ought not to have been for the furtherance of my own interests. By using the man ill and following up a system of petty revenge, I placed myself in the wrong, and gave him an undue advantage. And this would have been of trifling importance had I really acquired the indifference of which I flattered myself; but having absolutely succeeded in injuring Frederick Vaux, and in reducing him below his just level in the opinion of society, I discovered by

my self-upbraiding and sympathy with his mortification,—that I was nearly as much in love as ever!”

“At least I trust you did not allow the traitor to participate in your discovery?”

“And do you suppose, my very dearest Lady Rawleigh, that any woman on earth, under such circumstances, is capable of concealing them from the person most interested to detect her weakness?—At least I flattered myself that my secret was safe; that my demeanour to Vaux and Dynley was unexceptionable, and only indicative of my contempt of their manoeuvres in the Zibrinczki ménage;—and I pursued my routine of carnival gaieties,—of balls,—masquerades,—carousals,—sledge-parties,—tableaux, and proverbs,—with the most popular grace and dignity, and a persuasion that the treacherous Frederick rated himself as the last person in Vienna in the estimation of the ambassador’s daughter. But the enemy had better intelligence!—He soon discovered that his happiness was indispensable to my own: and by assuming the misanthropic despondency of an ill-used and miserable man, contrived to establish himself on more than his former footing of favour at the embassy.”

“And Dynley?—did he sanction such a relapse on the part of his friend?”

“It never would have occurred, but that my enemy had been recalled to England by the sudden death of the uncle from whom he inherits his fortune. Vainly did Princess Zibrinczki implore him to lessen the agony of their eternal separation by the delay of a few months—a few weeks—a few days. The connexion had been one of mere selfish convenience on his part; and now that the necessity was over, he took no further pains to disguise the fact. On the Continent, people have more politeness even in their perfidies;—men who are not ashamed to be traitors, would blush to exhibit themselves as brutes; and such was the indignation excited in the best circles of Vienna by the conduct of Milor Dinli to the Princess, that his friend (who by the way he discarded, on his accession of fortune, almost as cavalierly as his lady-love) would certainly have found it necessary to take his leave of that stage, had he not found shelter under the renewed protection of the infatuated Sophia Rhyse, and in the most vehement and vociferous disavowal of his quondam protector. He amused himself in sharing the indignation and vows of vengeance of the Zibrinczki, and the smiles and sighs of Lord Offaley’s daughter.”

“I cannot but fancy you are calumniating yourself,” cried Frederica. “It seems to me impossible that at any period of your life you should have been so deficient in proper spirit.”

“So fully can I enter into your contempt of my weakness,”

continued Lady Sophia, "that I dare not and will not hint to you the length of time my blindness was destined to endure. I have some consolation in hoping that from first to last my infatuation remained unsuspected by the world in general. My father imagined my determined predilection for a single life to proceed from some girlish partiality contracted at Twickenham; and my Vienna friends attributed my refusal of several distinguished nobles of the Austrian court to the narrow prejudices of my heretic condition. One person, however—one only person proved more discriminating! General Lee—the faithful and beloved friend of my father;—who had visited us at Florence, and already directed his attention to Vaux's proceedings and my own folly, was disgusted when the chances of a summer tour brought him to our residence at Neudorf to find the successful plotter re-established among us at Vienna. From my earliest childhood he had been my fervent and partial friend, and was still much too affectionately disposed towards me to open my father's eyes on the subject;—but to myself he spoke without reserve.

"Do not fancy yourself a match, dearest Sophy," said he, to the child of his old friend, 'for the cold-blooded worldliness of yonder villain. He is deceiving you into a reliance on his delicacy and sensibility, only because he finds himself elevated in the world by his connection with you and yours; you are lavishing the rich treasure of your affections on an ungrateful egotist.'

"But alas! even these judicious warnings were given in vain—I still beheld in Vaux the only object on earth worthy my interest,—when a few months after the departure of General Lee, an event—a domestic event occurred.—But pardon me, dearest Lady Rawleigh; I have not yet attained sufficient courage to talk of my father's death as of the ordinary events of life! Suffice it that I lost him—that I was left to the moderate inheritance he had announced—that Horatio Rhyse's father, an Irish squire, encumbered with debts and children, became Earl of Offaley—and myself, a repining inmate of that most odious mansion at Twickenham."

"Do not distress yourself by entering farther into those details," said Frederica soothingly, when she perceived that her companion was far more agitated than she cared to avow. "Another time—"

"No!—I have nearly concluded—one more plunge, and the worst will be over. Lady Derenzy already was a widow when I returned to her roof; and I soon found reason to acknowledge how much I had been formerly obliged to her mother's participation in her restless despotism, and to the influence of my father's importance upon her mind. She was now a thousand-fold more frivolous and vexatious than ever;

—lived in a perpetual ferment of finesse for my matrimonial advancement; and passed her days in elegizing the forfeited honours of the Earldom of Lawford and Elvington Park, and divers other landed estates and landed proprietors, which I might have antecedently made my own;—as well as in devising further schemes of hymeneal speculation. I do assure you,—Frederica, that the dragons, bonzes, and other figurative monsters assembled in the Twickenham china gallery, are lovely in comparison with the collection of human horrors tendered by Lady Derenzy to my choice. A stranger viewing the masculine moiety of her chosen set, might have supposed her a modern Circe exercising her spells over a herd of brutes.”

“I scarcely dare connect any further inquiry with the name of Mr. Vaux?” hesitated Lady Rawleigh.

“Nor did I.—Nor was there any occasion for the effort. Having accurately investigated the state of my father’s affairs, and ascertained that common rumour had rightly prognosticated the limited extent of my inheritance, he departed in quest of some more wealthy alliance or auspicious friendship; and when next I saw this former object of my idolatry (it was not however till five years after I became an orphan) Mr. Vaux was enacting the part of double to Lord Calder, and of lover to Lord Calder’s licentious sister! Time, however, and the minute martyrdom of daily subservience to the whims of my arbitrary aunt had somewhat tamed down my susceptibility; and I met him at that period with all the real indifference I had formerly attempted to assume. I doubt whether he was conscious of the change,—or even of my presence or existence:—a mere Lady Sophia with ten thousand pounds was to him as unimportant as the chair on which she was seated.”

“And General Lee?” said Frederica.—“You seem to hesitate in bringing him back upon the scene.”

“I ought not,—for he was my only surviving friend. From the moment of my arrival in England he attached himself to Lady Derenzy’s society, watched over my happiness, soothed all my petty mortifications; and only waited to ascertain that my paltry provision repelled the ardour of my former admirers, and anticipated the pretensions of new ones, to offer me his hand. I wish I could do justice to the noble frankness of his dealings towards me. He told me without reserve that had his property been sufficiently at his disposal to secure the independance of the daughter of his friend without degrading her by an alliance with a decrepit veteran, he would have joyfully embraced the alternative, and bestowed on me the means of happiness with the man of my choice. ‘Yes, Sophy,’—said he,—‘although it would have grieved

me to the very heart's core to see you reward the indelicate double-dealing of a wretch like Vaux, I would have borne it in preference to the apprehension that you bestow yourself on me with repugnance. But, alas!—it is a jointure and not a dowry I am enabled to offer you. I do not ask you to love me, or to regard me with warmer interest than you have always evinced towards your father's friend; —but if a home secure from the vexatious tyranny of Lady Derenzy,—if an indulgent and assiduous protector afford any attraction to you, —accept them, my dear child, accept them; and imagine you have found in old Randolph Lee the revival of your father's tenderness.”

## CHAPTER X.

Since there are persons who complain  
 There's too much satire in my vein,  
 That I am often found exceeding  
 The rules of raillery and breeding,—  
 With too much freedom treat my betters,  
 Not sparing even men of letters;  
 Ye, who are skill'd in lawyer's lore,  
 What's your advice?—Shall I give o'er,  
 Nor even fools or knaves expose,  
 In biting verse or slumb'rous prose;—  
 And to avoid all future ill,  
 In my scrutoire lock up my quill?

DEAN SWIFT.

“It was in a moment of domestic irritation proceeding from my aunt's paltry manœuvres,” continued Lady Sophia, attempting to rally her spirits, “that this explanation afforded me the prospect of release. Do not, however, imagine that the feeling and generosity of Lee were rewarded by my acceptance of his hand solely from interested motives;—I solemnly protest to you, Frederica, that had one gleam of my former infatuated attachment lingered in my heart, or had I been unable to pronounce with perfect sincerity my vows of love and obedience, I would have clung to the chains of my importunate bondage sooner than become his wife. But he was satisfied with my candid explanation of the state of my feelings,—an explanation which his own acute discernment had fully forestalled. I did not disguise from him that my heart had been stung into the bitterness of disappointed affection,—that my mind was harassed by the humiliation of mortified vanity,—that I was out of love with my species and with myself;—but I promised to reward his generosity in accepting for his companion a peevish and rejected misanthrope, by attempting to render myself more worthy his regard. Fortunately he had confidence in the honesty of his old friend's daughter;

He trusted in the blood of Loredano  
 Warm in my heart;

and satisfied all Lady Derenzy's apprehensions of having to endure the company of her indigent niece as a perpetual bur-

then, by endowing me with settlements to the utmost amount his tenure of an entailed property would admit."

"And thus you were restored to liberty and happiness!" cried Frederica. "But I do not understand by what method of co-operation in Vaux's villany, Lord Calder and his sister became so abhorrent to your feelings?"

"Ay! I forget, or tried to evade the necessity, of unveiling one of the most grievous gangrenes of a wounded heart. Know, dearest Frederica, that in the season of my unlimited trust in Mr. Vaux, when we were all but betrothed lovers, or rather when we were affectionate and confidential friends, I had exchanged a thousand trifles with him. Either in ignorance of the world or defiance of its misinterpretation, I gave him books, antiques, and even the worst and most unadvised pledge of a woman's tenderness,—a ring bearing my initials and a lock of hair. I will not recur to the protestations of good faith and gratitude with which it was originally received: but you will readily believe that when I beheld it on all occasions ostentatiously displayed on the finger of Lady Rochester, I grew sufficiently indignant. Judge, however, what were my feelings on discovering that every idle particular of the *belle passion* entertained by Lady Sophia Rhyse for a man who had never vouchsafed her the least assurance of preference, or exhibited towards her more than the courtesies of an ordinary acquaintance, had not only been recounted for her diversion, but that she amused herself by repeating the scandalous tale in all companies, with the most wicked exaggerations and groundless inferences."

"Shameful!—shameful to both parties; but in Lady Rochester unfeminately false to the cause of her sex."

"Calder's offence, however, although of a complexion equally dark, I have never definitely traced home. It was, indeed, while living in habits of the most confidential friendship with his lordship,—then, as now, avowedly the most deliberate and practised libertine of our times,—that Vaux, shortly after my marriage, hazarded those declarations of attachment, and explanations of his former conduct, which were not necessary to raise my detestation to the highest pitch. Think, my dearest Lady Rawleigh, think of the humiliation of receiving a similar insult from a man once fondly loved: of being told that the motives of my union with General Lee were universally detected; and that I could not do better than profit by the liberty I had thus acquired, by bestowing my heart according to its original suggestions, in pursuance of the system which had induced me to emancipate myself from Lady Derenzy's trammels by a repugnant matrimonial engagement."

"But it was *not* repugnant," persisted Lady Rawleigh. "Independent of the bond of early regard between you and of the generous sympathy evinced by him in every stage of your affairs, General Lee is a person whom no woman *could* regard with repugnance.—The most agreeable companion—the most graceful, courteous—"

"Thank you, thank you!" interrupted Lady Sophia with emotion. "But I will not tax your kindness to invent arguments in my favour; for guiltless as I was of all evil intention, and fervent in veneration for my husband, I own I had the weakness to feel rebuked by such an accusation. I had no longer courage to encounter those whisperers of society by whom the falsehood had been propagated; or the credulous idlers who had been taught to misinterpret my character. I persuaded General Lee that my health required a residence abroad; and, in deference to my supposed predilections, Italy was selected to restore me;—*Italy!*"

"That was scarcely judicious; but the general probably recurred to the numerous foreign friendships and connexions you must have formed during your residence in Tuscany."

"And by so doing actually endangered my life!—Scarcely were we settled at Florence for the winter, when the force of association, the vexations I had recently endured, and my consciousness of the calumnies of which I had been the object, conspired to throw me into a most precarious state of health; and it was then, Frederica, I first became acquainted with the amiable character of Mary Trevelyan. I believe I acquired some interest in her eyes by being able to talk to her of Launceston and yourself:—while Lady Mary, from the similitude existing between my former position and her own, was to me as a memorial of my early dangers and troubles. During my long and tedious illness, your cousin devoted herself to me with all the patience of a sister, and I had ample leisure to become aware of all her excellence."

"But surely the kindness of General Lee rendered you independent of her attentions? In him you had an unfailing friend and companion!"

"I have promised you my entire confidence," replied Lady Sophia, while her lips quivered with rising emotion, and tears glistened in her eyes, "or I should find it difficult to confess the full extent of my weakness. Frederica! when a woman tells you that she is satisfied to feel esteem and friendship for her husband, mistrust either her candour or her disposition. It is written that Love shall be the bond of wedlock; and nature, indignant to find her laws trifled with and rendered subservient to the mercenary interests of life, takes a signal vengeance on the offender. Till my marriage, I regarded the General with the dutiful affection of a daugh-

ter; but this sentiment was incompatible with our new position, and the deficiency was compensated by no happier result. My gratitude for his sacrifice in my favour rose like a barrier of ice eternally between us,—we existed and exist in a false position;—I cannot lose in his presence the humiliating consciousness of obligation, nor can *he* assume that familiarity of wedded life, which if tender, he fears would sit ungracefully on his grey hairs;—if stern, appear an assumption of authority betraying the benefactor. Nor dare I give way to the accidental impulse of my feelings when they urge me to any show of sympathy in his opinions and conduct, lest he should attribute my warmth to hypocrisy or interested motives;—for among the flagitious misrepresentations emanating from Lady Rochester and her lover, was an assertion that my ‘devotion to my decrepit and doting husband was instigated by my solicitude—concerning his *will*!’ A perpetual constraint therefore limits the measure of my affection; and wherever constraint exists between married people, mistrust and wretchedness are its companions.—I have no longer”—

But the words were arrested on her lips. The door of the box was turned on its noiseless hinges, and the attendant demanded for Lord Calder an admittance which, however unwelcome, could scarcely be refused.

“I have held a long communing with myself,” said his lordship, as he accepted a seat between Frederica and her friend, “in order to acquire courage for this intrusion;—for being seated in the Whitehaven’s opposite box, my glass enabled me to discover you both engaged in some profoundly interesting discussion. Even the charming Ellen Tree has not induced you for a single instant to divert your attention from yourselves to the stage.”

“But did you not naturally suspect,” cried Lady Sophia, anxious to silence his comments on the interest of their conversation, “that we were arguing the important cause of your ball; and passing in review all possible costumes of all possible characters, to do justice to *your* hospitality and our own attractions?”—

“And what is the result of so much eloquence and debate?” inquired his lordship.

“That Lady Sophia accepts the part of Brenda Troil; while *I* am to figure forth as the sable Minna!” said Frederica, looking significantly at her friend, whom she thus entrapped into acquiescence with her plans.—“My brother and Sir Brooke will complete our group.”

“You decline then the services of Mr. Rockingham?” inquired Lord Calder. “He will be happy to assist you, even should it be in the part of Triptolemus Yellowly.”

"We do not wish to exhibit the perfection of perfectness in our arrangements," replied Lady Rawleigh, "or some miraculous effort of wit might be expected at our hands; for my own part I intend to be too much amused with the general aspect of the pageant, to hazard any attempt at being amusing."

"You at least require no such pretension," replied Calder in a low voice, on perceiving that Lady Sophia had fixed her attention on the play bill. "It is not to be amused or instructed that the world seeks the society of Lady Rawleigh."

She that can *please* is certain to persuade—  
To-day is loved—to-morrow is obeyed!"

Involuntarily Frederica reverted to the details which had recently reached her ears concerning the tactics of Lord Calder and his friend; and a cloud overshadowed her countenance as she recoiled from his homage. For some minutes she maintained a contemplative silence.

"I suspect," said her insidious companion, "that you are rehearsing the part of the meditative Minna, and forbear to interrupt you."

"No! indeed," cried Lady Rawleigh. "I was simply considering your eulogium of the acting of Ellen Tree; and rejoicing that your more extensive experience confirms my opinions. To me she presents the *beau idéal* of what an elegant woman should appear in her own drawing-room; nor in this respect has she, with the exception of her charming elder sister, a rival in my memory. But you who remember Farren—the Lady Teazle par excellence—are better skilled to do justice to her merits."

"You have ascribed to your favourite," observed Lady Sophia, "precisely the measure of attraction which the Parisians adjudge to the exquisite Mars. For my part, I am inclined to extend my degree of admiration still further: and to say that her delineation of every class of life is as perfect as her portraiture of our own. Ellen Tree is, in fact, the actress of nature and of truth,—no studied *points*, no ranting bursts of vehemence weary our attention in her simple and graceful performance."

"Were I to compare her with the most perfect in her own art, either among the living or the dead," said Lord Calder, "it would be with Abington;—that fascinating being whom I remember besieged by all the belles of the great world for counsel touching their airs and graces, and furbelows; and whose Millamant and Widow Belmour afforded a living mirror for their edification."

"If I may trust the reminiscences of Lady Derenzy and

her coterie, Abington's vein was exclusively comic, while Miss Tree, or I am much mistaken, would prove the best Imogene, Ophelia, or Viola on the stage."

"I am glad your enthusiasm has stopped short of Juliet," said Lady Rawleigh. "I doubt whether I could trust her tenderness of tone and nature sufficiently for the heroine of Verona."

"I never saw a woman,—or rather an actress,—who combined the gifts requisite to embody that exquisite creation," observed Lord Calder; "a creation combining the playful innocence of girlhood, with the impassioned fervour of a woman,—*of a wife*.—It is impossible to mark in stage representation the gradual developement of Juliet's character. That lovely girl, for instance, whom you honoured with your notice the other night at Almack's—(we will call her Leonora, for the sake of euphony)—with all her soft naïvété and grace, might bend her knee to Lady Capulet and reprove the garrulity of the nurse in the first act, without any injustice to the poet's fancy; but from the garden scene I should dismiss her as utterly incapable!—Before Juliet reappears in the balcony, the rock has been struck—the passionate tide of womanly feeling has gushed forth;—and it would require all Lady Rawleigh's purity of heart,—all *her* glow of sensibility, to do justice to such poetry as

In truth, fair Montagu, I am too fond,  
And therefore thou must think my 'haviour light,  
Yet trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true  
Than they who have more cunning to be strange."

In the recital of these lines, Lord Calder threw somewhat more of animation and emotion than accords with the even tenour of ordinary discourse; and it was not till the last tones of his rhapsody had melted in her ears,—while her face was covered with blushes, arising from the significance of his compliment,—that Frederica noticed her husband's entrance into the box, and his bewildered stare of astonishment and vexation! Appearances were strangely against her! She had tranquillized his alarms by announcing herself about to pass a solitary evening with a female friend;—and he found her listening with visible traces of sensibility upon her countenance, to the tender declamations of an accomplished libertine!—Appearances were strangely against her!

Meanwhile Lady Sophia, who perceived nothing peculiar in the position of the parties, and who, in her perfect reliance on Frederica's excellence, and Frederica's attachment to her husband, was satisfied that Rawleigh's arrival was extremely acceptable to her friend, rather heightened than soothed the

disorder of the honourable member for Martwich, by exclaiming with playful eagerness, "I congratulate myself, my dear Sir Brooke, that you have thus opportunely made your appearance among us. There is a petition I am dying to make to Lord Calder; and I have been resigning myself to the conviction that I have no chance of obtaining *his* attention so long as Frederica's is disengaged. Do for goodness sake sit down, and make yourself as agreeable to Lady Rawleigh as ever you did to Miss Rawdon, in order that my request may be framed and granted without reaching her ears."

There was no possibility of refusing the seat to which, by a motion of Lady Sophia's hand, he was invited beside his wife, —although he entertained a suspicion that it had only been very recently vacated by Lord Calder; and even Frederica was obliged to follow the indication of her friend, and enter into conversation with Sir Brooke, who appeared quite as cross as if he had been encountering a second dinner with his Argyll-street cousin, or a sixth with his Martwich constituents. She managed, however, to manufacture a few questions of sufficient length and breadth to evince her integrity towards Lady Sophia and her secrets; while Rawleigh, on the contrary, dotted forth his jealousy and ill-humour in such concise monosyllables, that it required a considerable exercise of candour on his lady's part, not to overhear the greater portion of the dialogue of her companions.

"I am obstinately bent on your allowing me to bring a young friend of mine to your fête," had been Lady Sophia's opening phrase. "I have very little doubt, by the way, that most persons of your acquaintance experience a similar inclination; though very few may have found sufficient audacity to make it known. Mine, however, is of a most unlimited extent; and I not only ask your permission to introduce a stranger into your inaccessible abode, but insist that you trust implicitly to me for her right and title to such an honour,—without explanation given or required."

"You are indeed affording me a most unexpected proof of kindness in an opportunity of meeting your wishes," replied Calder; who was far more anxious to listen to the terms of greeting between Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh, than to the name of her ladyship's protégée. "You shall receive a blank card to-morrow."

"To satisfy your apprehensions on one point," she resumed in the same sportive tone, "be assured that my demand has no connexion with the untuneable patronymic, so discordant to your ears and those of my aunt Derenzy."

"If you allude to Miss Waddlestone," observed Calder with an air of candour and bonhommie, "be assured that my ball will be embellished by her presence. The Princess de

Guéénée has undertaken to bring her; and I am so far from wishing to disown the acquaintance of a man whom, as Lord Vardington, I pronounced to be one of the most intelligent and gentlemanly with whom I ever conversed, that I have made it a point to leave my name and an invitation with her father. But Mr. Waddlestone, in a spirit to which I render justice and honour, has declined it. I am happy to say that *his* is at present the only negative I have received."

As the details of a meeting broken "by most admired disorder,"—whether an election committee, or a *petit comité* in a private box of the Pandemonium called a patent theatre,—are far from amusing, either in fact or recapitulation, it will be more satisfactory as well as more edifying to turn from Rawleigh's discontents and Frederica's anxieties, to an explanation of the position and disposition of this said Mr. Waddlestone of Waddlestone House;—a personage deserving higher respect than to be introduced solely as an object of mystification to the reader.

It is probable that he would have been regarded with greater interest some nineteen years previous to his appearance on the Hampton race-ground; for at the age of twenty-one, although unencumbered with a vulgar name, and a splendid fortune, he might have been cited as exhibiting a rare union of personal and mental endowments. An accidental encounter with the heiress of one of the wealthiest aldermen of the city of London was destined however to transform him from a well-connected young barrister, with his way to make in the world by his own abilities, into an independent man, condemned for the remainder of his days to association with persons of unpolished habits and uncultivated minds. Cheered by the competition and gratulations of his professional associates, the gay and handsome Edward Meredyth did not hesitate to accept the seemingly brilliant destiny opened to the avowed partiality of Miss Waddlestone; and within a few weeks of their first introduction at Weymouth, his name and fate were changed as if by the commencement of a new existence. But long before the termination of the honeymoon, he began to doubt whether his career of professional exertion might not have been preferable to the golden independence shared with a companion so totally devoid of delicacy or intellectuality as the partner whom he had chosen,—or rather who had chosen him, for the remainder of his days.

For some time he indulged in a delusive hope that cultivation and intercourse with the world would soften down the glaring vulgarity of Mrs. W.'s mind and manners. But these visionary expectations gradually subsided; and had it not been for the dawning beauty and promising disposition of the

little girl, who had been the pledge of this inauspicious union, the treasures of opulence would have been insufficient to render life endurable. Even here, however, disappointments awaited him, such as form, and ought to form, the retributive chastisement of mercenary alliances. He was persuaded that Leonora could not fail to contract something of Mrs. W.'s coarseness of feeling and demeanour; and the repining husband had too strong a respect for the claims of a woman whose moral conduct was irreproachable and heart warmly affectionate, and who was moreover the sole artificer of his fortunes, to interpose the slightest barrier between the tenderness of a mother and her child. Fortunately the parents of the heiress had not exhibited that tenacious longevity peculiar to persons blest with large property and expectant heirs; and his mortified feelings experienced some consolation in escaping the sneers of his envious friends and connexions, and flying from his splendid mansion and princely establishment to the less fastidious circles of the Continent.

It was gratifying to a man of his sensitive disposition to alienate his darling from the contamination of her mother's low connexions and servile associates, and devote his whole time to her improvement, and by procuring for her the first masters which Italy could furnish, render her accomplishments worthy the brilliant fortune of which she was the sole inheritor. Nor did Leonora disappoint his partial expectations. Her beauty and talents, and gentleness, would have done honour to the most illustrious parentage. But above all, she was capable of appreciating the high endowments of that father to whom she had proved a spring of hope in the wilderness;—and they became united by a species of mutual affection, which would have resembled the bond of friendship rather than of filial and paternal love, but that it was qualified by respect on one side, and a tenderness amounting to idolatry on the other.

To do poor Mrs. Waddlestone simple justice, she never evinced the slightest jealousy of either. She regarded her husband and her child as the finest things in the world; and had not this partiality been exceeded by a reverence for those still finer things,—money and rank,—she might perhaps have been tamed down into less ostensible vulgarity. But from her youth upwards (saving in the instance of her tender passion for young Edward Meredyth) she had looked forward to achieving greatness;—had been highly displeased by her husband's renouncement of a city career, and the contingency of a knighted shrievalty;—and now exulted in Leonora's loveliness, and Leonora's captivations, chiefly with the view to becoming mother-in-law to a lord. She was indefatigable in admonishing her daughter, when beyond the reach of Mr.

W.'s reproof that she would never consent to her union with any man below the condition of a peer.

Meanwhile on Leonora's approach to womanhood, her vigilant and discriminating father naturally became anxious to see her surrounded by the precepts and example of her own countrywomen; and her fifteenth birthday was celebrated in that country which has been stigmatized as a land of shopkeepers, and which in its habits and opinions is decidedly the most aristocratic in Europe. But Mr. W. no sooner found himself settled at Waddlestone House, than he began to doubt the wisdom of his system of education; and to wish that he had nerved his courage to support the inferior associations of his appointed destiny, and renounce the attractions of a long residence abroad. His wealth and intellectual resources had gradually opened his way to the first society on the Continent. Persons of every rank advance a step in importance by settling abroad; and the liberality, exquisite taste, and unexceptionable address of Mr. Waddlestone had introduced him not only to the highest native circles of Italy, but to those of his titled countrymen by whom they were frequented. His wife meanwhile (alas! that such should be his wife) finding little attraction in a society of which the dialogue was a sealed book, wisely preferred remaining at home with Leo and the governess: and thus secured her husband, in the eyes of the world, from the degrading association of a companion so inferior to himself.

But on returning to England the spell was broken!—In his own country Mr. W. felt that he must encounter the suffrage of society in his positive capacity as co-partner in a soap manufactory, and sole partner of one of the most vulgar women in the three kingdoms; and what was far more revolting to his feelings, that his graceful, elegant, Leonora must be ushered into the world under her auspices, and sought in marriage by some person of a similar degree! He felt that his lovely child would be rejected from the rank of life in which he desired to fix her destiny,—or that she would be sought from interested motives by some noble spendthrift, intent on teaching her to “forget her own people and her father's house;” while the undisguised prejudice cherished by Mrs. Waddlestone for lords of every sort and denomination, soon made him tremble for the choice which must decide the happiness of his daughter.

It was under these circumstances that Lord Launceston had made the acquaintance of the family, and accepted Mrs. W.'s unequivocal partialities in his favour; and the anxious father soon became very favourably impressed by the frank and noble disposition of Leonora's new admirer.—He saw him galled by the scornful self-sufficiency of his caste; uncon-

taminated by the narrow bigotry of fine-gentlemanism; and was delighted to perceive that the fancy entertained by his lord-loving lady for the Hon. Col. Rhyse and Lord Putney, previous to Launceston's arrival, was fully transferred to the new pretendant. It was not, indeed, that the youthful proprietor of Marston Park and its mortgages affected any contempt for his own conventional rank; but he regarded it as of no supreme importance, and incapable of elevating him above a man of such perfectly gentlemanly tone and eminent talents as Mr. Waddlestone. There was, in short, an unaffected cordiality of heart about Lord Launceston which placed him above the petty affectations of the exquisites and exclusives who already thronged around the heiress of five hundred thousand pounds.

But Mr. W. had become intimately acquainted with the perils and dangers of precipitate matrimony; and was desirous that his daughter should extend her observations in the rank of life to which her mother's whims and her own dowry appeared to limit her choice, previous to an irrevocable decision. He had formerly imagined the docile Leonora as warmly inclined in favour of Lord Offaley's younger son, Horatio, as she now appeared towards the brother of Lady Rawleigh; and dreading her vacillation of feeling on such a point, eagerly renounced his former determination that she should enter into such circles only as were freely open to her mother. He even succeeded in persuading Mrs. Waddlestone that Leonora's future interests would be best served by allowing her to make an occasional appearance in the great world under the care of their Italian friends, the Duchess of Whitehaven, the Princesse de Guéménée, or Lady Wroxworth; and having accomplished this point, patiently waited the result of his daughter's fashionable connexions.

Few things were nearer his heart than that she should retain her attachment for Lord Launceston, and cultivate the friendship of the gentle and amiable Lady Rawleigh. But earnestly as he desired to fix Leonora's future destiny in their society, he did not shrink from exposing her feelings to the ordeal of Almack's and the temptations of Calder House, in order to assure himself that their predilection was as permanent as it was honourable to her judgment.

## CHAPTER XI.

The town, the court, is beauty's proper sphere,—  
 That is our heaven, and we are angels there.  
 In the gay circle thousand Cupids rove :—  
 The "House of Calder" is the court of Love!

LORD LITTLETON.

Short and cheerful were the days and nights that intervened previous to the fête at Calder House; for they were enlivened by some half-a-dozen balls of minor importance given by the Draxfields, Whitehavens, and Wandesfords, and by the exciting anticipations and discussions arising from the promised masque. Even the longest summer's-day becomes abbreviated for fine ladies who open their eyes to its sunshine at three o'clock;—even the tedious monotony of night proves but little wearisome to fine gentlemen, for whose recreation Folly shakes her bells from midnight till sunrise!

More than once during the week Lady Rawleigh ventured to allude to Lady Sophia Lee's original reluctance to her project, and to tax her with all the contrariety of conjugal rebellion in having resisted the General's request that she would accept the invitation of Lord Calder;—for she had since become one of the most eager debaters on the anticipated pleasures and splendours of the evening.

"It is true," she replied, in extenuation, "that on my arrival in England, I was anxiously bent on avoiding the society of these people—who are distasteful to me on general grounds—and positively odious when I reflect on their peculiar dealings towards myself. But I am unwilling to afford such persons as Mr. Vaux and Lady Rochester the gratification of perceiving they possess the power to influence my actions;—and, in truth, I have a latent object for wishing to join in the *mêlée*."

"An object?" cried Frederica, suddenly checking her horse under the shade of one of those spreading elms which shelter the fair equestrians of Routine-row; and approaching so near her friend as to be beyond reach of Launceston's and Lord Putney's inquisition.

"No, no!—Do not suppose, *ma belle et bonne*, that I intend to part on such easy terms with my secret. The commonplace and matter-of-fact existence of a London season so rarely affords the gratification of a mystery, that I cannot possibly

dispense with even half a cloud in your favour. Thursday night, remember, must of necessity reveal the oracle!"

But when Thursday night—the Thursday night really arrived,—Frederica was too much engaged in the general interests of the fête, the fêter, and the fêted, to retain any remembrance of Lady Sophia Lee's mysterious announcement; and had been moreover too much harassed for several antecedent days by Sir Brooke's involuntary ebullitions of matrimonial irritation which had been in no slight measure augmented by the incident of the theatrical rendezvous, to concede even to these the importance so much their due. Unable to manufacture any reasonable excuse for forbidding his wife's appearance at the fête,—unwilling that she should join in its seductions without the restraint of his presence,—yet loathing the necessity which compelled him to enter the enchanted circle of Calder House,—the unhappy man was fidgeted beyond all the consolations of his philosophy! He had no ear at his disposal to which he could intrust the measure of his domestic griefs; for Lady Launceston, through some strange obliquity of moral vision, seemed to regard this odious entertainment as a matter of exultation and delight;—Sophronia, of Twickenham, was never more gratified than by hearing the names of her nephew and niece connected with that of the distinguished Calder; and poor Mrs. Martha, his never-failing source of sympathy,—whose mild unguent of commiseration was generally so much at his service,—had taken this inopportune moment to convey herself and the dingy linnet to Eastbourne for change of dulness.—“Mr. Richard Derenzy and family” had also “departed” in the middle of the fashionable winter, to pass the summer at his seat in the fens of Lincolnshire, at the imminent risk of extirpation by the gnats or the typhus fever;—and thus not one of the numerous savages of Sir Brooke's especial horde was at hand to endure the brunt, or moderate the misgivings of his ill-humour. Frederica began to think that the demon of discord had obtained a permanent settlement in Bruton-street; and Rawleigh, with the genuine near-sightedness of a jealous man, betrayed his apprehensions of the superior attractions of his rival's dwelling and society, by rendering his own as disagreeable as his utmost industry could effect.

From all these trivial but vexatious contrarieties, a prospect of escape to Lord Calder's land of Faëry was indeed inviting; and never had Frederica entered her carriage at midnight with a lighter step or more sanguine expectations of pleasure, than when—plaided to the utmost rigour of the law—she seated herself beside Lord Launceston on her way to Calder House, while Sir Brooke followed in the character of Mordaunt Merton and the chariot of Lady Sophia. In the

course of a few minutes they entered a court-yard disciplined by a regiment of policemen, and illuminated by the flashing of a thousand torches.

"Remember, Launceston, you are engaged to be my cavalier for the evening," whispered Lady Rawleigh to the bold Cleveland,—when she perceived, through the gleaming windows of the splendid pile indications of a tremendous crowd assembled within.

"Certainly!—Unless you release me for the space of a waltz or two with my pretty little wife. Leonora accompanies the *Guéménées* to-night, who have taken upon themselves to misrepresent the *Midsummer Night's Dream*; my angel being, of course, Titania, and old Broughley the illustrious Bottom. But tell me, Frederica,—what fair unknown is Rawleigh handing out of Lady Sophia's carriage?"

"Herself,—in the character of my blue-eyed sister, Brenda Troil."

"*Juste ciel! il y en a deux!*" as the French ghost-seer exclaimed. But Lady Sophia's wraith is as ugly and black as Hecate."

"She has certainly recruited some stranger into our group in the part of Norna of the Fitful Head!" cried Lady Rawleigh in a tone of vexation; and she began to think herself ill-used that her friend had not consulted her inclinations on the subject.

But to how incalculable a measure of indignation did this feeling expand, when,—on joining Lady Sophia at the door of the vestibule, in order to take her arm and make their entrance in Zetland sisterhood, she perceived, not only that her suspicions of the intrusion of an importunate Norna into their community were founded on fact, but that their unwelcome addition—this importunate appendix—this Zetland supererogation—was embodied in the person of the odious Miss Elbany!—In spite of the elf-locks wild which hung in hideous luxuriance round her walnut-stained countenance,—in spite of the coarse and unsightly draperies which transformed her fine person into the semblance of decrepitude,—there was no mistaking the large dark eyes and lofty brow of Lady Launceston's astucious companion!

Frederica was paralyzed!—at once by the audacity of the intruder, and the unfair deception exercised upon herself. A thousand vagaries rushed through her mind in explanation of the event. Her infatuated parent had perhaps interested Lady Sophia in favour of her protégée,—for Lady Launceston's undisguised interest in the fête was otherwise difficult of comprehension;—Sir Brooke himself was probably the confederate of a design which had tempted him to overcome his repugnance to Calder and his clique;—and as to her bro-

ther,—their could be little doubt of *his* having acted as an accomplice from first to last! All,—all—her nearest and dearest had thus leagued themselves to force her into collision with a designing upstart,—her rival with mother, and brother, and husband!

But the tact and good-breeding of modern times interdict a *scene* in society, even for the gratification of an angry beauty; and Frederica ascended the crowded stairs with much dignity, and without deigning to demand an explanation from any of the party. Had she condescended to bend either ear or eye towards their movements, she might have ascertained from the genuine and delighted start of astonishment which followed the ingenuous Launceston's recognition of Miss Elbany, that *he* at least was as complete a dupe as herself; but as it was, Lady Rawleigh entered the gorgeous saloon with a spot burning on her cheek, and an air of perturbation fluttering her brow, which only too well became the agitated heroine of the Pirate.

Lady Sophia Rhyse, on the contrary, whose countenance sparkled with exultation arising either from gratified benevolence in reuniting the lovers, or possibly from the feminine triumph of making mischief,—seemed to have regained her earliest flush of youth in order to do justice to the beauties of the golden Brenda, while her fair hair and deep blue eyes derived new grace from the picturesque simplicities of her Scottish costume; and thus, chance imparted to either sister the expression best befitting her fictitious character.—A murmur of approbation greeted the entrance of the group.

But what Ariostoian pen might presume to describe the dazzling magnificence of the gallery devoted to the court of the Fairy Queen?—Even Lady Rawleigh, though swelling under the consciousness of injury and in some measure obscured in vision by the rising tears of jealous caprice, was startled by the gorgeous arrangements of the scene. Experienced as she was in the chameleon-like nature of Lady Rochester's charms, she had not prepared herself for the splendour of Gloriana's attire, or the well-manufactured loveliness of her face. Seated on her throne of state, among bowers of blossoming orange-trees, radiant with smiles and diamonds, and fanned by a bevy of resplendent Cupids,—of Lord Johns, and Lord Harries, and Lord Cecils, borrowed from the nurseries of her friends the Duchess of Lancaster and Lady Rosebank,—by a very slight effort of indulgence she might be said to picture forth the mother of the Graces. The gentle Una, meanwhile, wore a chaste holiness of brow which afforded no grounds for the report that she had ever smiled on Lord Putney's addresses, or listened to the double-

entendres of Lord Rochester;—Lady Blanche Thornton, as Belphæbe, seemed as well satisfied that

Upon her forehead many graces sat  
Under the shadow of her even brows,

as Mr. Vaux's flatteries could render her;—while Lady Barbara Dynley and Lady Waldington had tamed down their wandering glances into the pure simplicity of Fidelia and Speranza!

Lord Wallingford,—a second Lucifer in sin and beauty—was the representative of the Red Cross Knight,—the milk-and-water nephew of Lord Calder, Alfred Rockingham, had been thrust into the part of Sir Satyrane! Sir Guyon was embodied by Lord Putney;—the aged Celia by the withered, Lady Huntingfield;—and Charissa by the dowager Duchess of Ledburry, with her whole soul engrossed by "the point, the vole, and the king." Vaux was the royal Arthur! Sir Caleb Thornton had consented to invest himself in Duessa's hideosities; Timeas was Sir Mark Milman; Mr. Fieldham was Artegal; Blandamour and Paridel, Sir Robert Morse and Mr. Erskyne; in a word, the whole corps dramatique of the fashionable world, however unconnected with these pages, had been enlisted into the ranks of Spenser's gorgeous romance.

But notwithstanding the exquisite taste displayed throughout the draperies and grouping of the masque, by Sir Philip Ochre the fashionable academician who had consented to act as stage-manager, the inefficiency of the actors contrived to convert it into a succession of ill-imagined and worse-executed tableaux. Lord Calder had previously concerted the arrangements of the evening so that the crimson velvet curtains concealing that portion of the gallery destined to dramatic representation, might be drawn aside at the overture of an invisible orchestra,—to which, on Lady Rawleigh's arrival, a signal was communicated by himself; and few even of the uninitiated but perfectly understood when the first soft measures of this seemingly supernatural music were heard, that the lovely woman by whose side his lordship was pleased to station himself, was the unacknowledged queen of the fête.

For full five minutes, every one was in an ecstasy of delight, and exclaimed that never was there exhibited so exquisite an illusion;—in five minutes more, every one yawned, and wondered what would come next;—and in the concluding five minutes of the quarter of an hour destined to the representation of a masque which had cost a thousand pounds or so in its preparatives, every one whispered that the whole

thing was a bore,—that Lady Rochester sat like an effigy and seemed to forget they had anything better to do than admire her;—and that after all the best actor in the business was Mrs. Erskyne's lion,—a stuffed quadruped borrowed from the British Museum!—The spectators, in fact, were all dying to get rid of the Faery Queen, that they might walk about and show their own costumes!

Meanwhile Lord Launceston had decidedly, and as it were in his own despite, riveted himself to the side of the Weird woman of the Fitful Head;—Sir Brooke Rawleigh found himself reluctantly compelled to offer *his* escort to the blue-eyed Brenda;—and thus Lord Calder remained at liberty to act as the guardian of the deserted Minna.

"I have never yet been tempted to assume a fancy costume," he whispered, glancing at his dark and unadorned sleeve as he drew her arm within his own, "but had I ventured to anticipate the honour which I now experience, I would have laid aside for once these sober sable weeds to assume the patriarchal dignity of Magnus Troil. Too happy should I be in even the passing dream of claiming a father's privileged interest in the destiny of the pensive Minna."

Lady Rawleigh attempted to regain her accustomed air of serenity as she listened to this equivocal allusion to the vexations clouding her brow. Had they been less real and less absorbing, her mistrust would probably have been excited by Lord Calder's artful affectation of assuming a *paternal* tone in his homage. But while he was still speaking, a band stationed at the head of the grand staircase struck up a Polonaise; and, heading the procession, he hastened to conduct Frederica through the suite of state rooms,—already crowded with the representatives of all nations and languages, attired in every variety of the superb and picturesque.

Dazzled by their gorgeous array, and startled from her personal meditations by the novelty, and stir, and flurry of such a scene, she gradually forgot that Miss Elbany linked either with the treacherous Rawleigh or the infatuated Launceston was promenading behind her, and gave herself up to the illusions of the hour;—to the animating inspiration of military music,—resplendent illuminations,—groves of unknown exotics,—and groups of all that was beautiful; illustrations, or grotesque in fashionable nature.

There was the Duchess of Middlesex, one of the gravest and most spotless of matrons, unsuspectingly exhibiting her loveliness in the costume of Raphael's Fornarina!—there was Lady Lawford, all rouge and crowsfeet, disfiguring the dress of Vandyke's Duchesse de St. Croix! Lady Margaret Fieldham displayed a visage as harsh as that of Carabosse enveloped in the velvet coif and pearly carcanet of the beautiful

Mary of Scotland ;—while the old Duchess of Trimblestown, grimly illuminated by diamond lanterns, had discriminately chosen to herself the farthingale and fraise of Catharine de Medicis, and looked fully capable of originating a second St. Bartholomew.

Then there was the bridal Viscountess, the plaintive little Lady Twadell, elevated by the most sublime cork-heels which Melmotte could manufacture into the semblance of a pigmy Cleopatra ; while her genuine antique of a Lord, periwigged and *grand-cordon*-ed into a courtier of the time of Louis XIV., looked three shades yellower than his hereditary point ruffles. The Coveys and Mapleberries having joined forces to form the brigade of the nine sisters of Parnassus ; having furnished themselves with *ormoulu* lyres, palettes, and flutes, which Lord Launceston persisted in mistaking for marrowbones and cleavers ;—and Lady Lotus, as guardian of the classical group, had profited largely by Sir Christopher's store of Oriental bangles, armlets, and other Brahminical mysteries, to assume the full-orbed lustre of the Priestess Luxima. Sir Christopher Lotus himself, with a countenance as blank and wire-wove as a new Album, represented Sir Roger de Coverly ; and the excellent Lady Wroxworth was admirably at home in Lady Lizard. Mr. Dynley, to whom Lady Rawleigh vouchsafed only a formal bow *en-passant*, formed an apt representative of Ali Pacha—

Full of strange oaths, and bearded like a pard ;

and was closely followed by the lofty Indice, converted by a peaked and hungry beard into the hyperbolical Malvolio,—a sneer on his lips, and a chamberlain's wand in his hand.

Just as they reached a vestibule dividing the suite from a staircase or rather reuniting it with the masque gallery, so that there was no possibility of escape or evasion, Frederica recognized at the opposite entrance the splendid group of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* ; and the beautiful *Princesse de Guéménée*, attired as the buskined *Hyppolita* with a diamond crescent sparkling on her imperial brow, immediately came forward to receive the homage of the lordly host. Her *Theseus* was the distinguished looking Count Rodenfels, familiarized by his birthright with the dignities of royal representation. The Prince was *Lysander* ; and two daughters of Lady Waldington, *Helena* and *Hermia*. But all eyes were attracted towards the elfin crew which completed the picture ; consisting of the Rodenfels' children as *Moth*, *Peaseblossom*, and *Cobweb*,—Colonel Rhyse, as *Robin Good-fellow*,—Prince Albert de Guéménée as *Oberon*, and *Leonora*—Lord Launceston's *Leonora*—as *'Titania'*—Her father's liberal

partiality had encircled her innocent brows with a diadem of diamond stars; her zone was wrought in the most precious gems, with mystic characters,—her silver wand tipped with “one entire and perfect chrysolite;” while her draperies of silver tissue were looped with strings of pearls such as task the fishers of Ormus. Frederica felt a thrill of triumphant delight as she noted the diminutive and delicate loveliness of the queen of the fairies, and recalled to mind the hideous transformation to which Miss Elbany’s vanity had consented in order to insure an entrance into Calder House. She even commiserated the self-reproach which she could not but attribute to her brother on finding thus strangely united in his presence his gentle and neglected love,—his bold and triumphant mistress.

As the rival parties became too closely commingled in the vestibule, and were of too familiar acquaintance in society to pass and “make no sign,” Lady Rawleigh profited by the colloquy between Lord Calder and the Amazonian queen to turn round for the first time during their promenade, and ascertain the effect produced on her companions, by the encounter. But Lady Sophia and Mordaunt Merton were deeply engaged in some seemingly interesting conversation; and she had scarcely an opportunity to note that Sir Brooke, even in the assumed character of Brenda’s adorer, wore an air of secret vexation, such as the rough “course of his true love” might be supposed to produce. On the present occasion, however, it was neither her husband nor her friend who moved her mischievous curiosity; and she hastened to bend an inquiring glance towards her brother,—the ferocious Norna,—and the queen of the fairies!

Leonora, holding the hand of the young Prince de Guéménée, was standing only a few paces distant from Lord Launceston, and looking all the loveliness which might be supposed to cover him with confusion. But to the utter amazement of Frederica, not a vestige of shame clouded the expression of his frank and open countenance!—He seemed quite as well satisfied with himself, as with the aspect of his bride, or the vicinity of the lady clinging to his arm;—nay! to the increasing astonishment of his sister, he presumed to kiss the tip of his finger to the smiling and gratified Titania, with an air of affectionate recognition and intelligence. It was really too much!—

And Miss Elbany!—How did her usual lofty self-possession uphold her through such an ordeal?—Lady Rawleigh felt that her own surprise would not be the least augmented by seeing the Companion imitate the assurance of the bold Pirate, and bestow a condescending salutation on the heiress. But this trial she was spared. Instead of boldly confronting

the stately Theseus and his train, Lucy had shaken her black elf-locks over her shoulders and countenance, so that the expression of her face was totally concealed from observation; and stood describing circles with her wizard staff,—that staff so different in its powers of enchantment from the light and jewelled wand of her elegant rival!

Uncertain whether she was aware of her proximity to the affianced wife of Lord Launceston, and rendered indignant by her brother's uncompromising defiance of propriety,—Frederica turned towards them with the intention of addressing his lordship in such terms as might reveal the fact; but at that moment "came wandering by a figure like a"—numskull's!—being that of Lord George, as Petrarch, arrayed for his coronation at the Capitol,—in a robe of crimson velvet, with a pyramidal cap (not very dissimilar from the juvenile dunce's pedagogue-inflicted cap of maintenance) encircled with a garland of bays; while his cloak of white satin was borne according to the authentic formula of the Roman solemnity, by "a young girl with dishevelled locks,—her feet bare—her figure enveloped in a leopard's skin,—to represent ENTHUSIASM." But alas! for this uninviting personification,—his lordship had been unable to secure a younger or a fairer nymph than Lady Lavinia Lisle; and as he stalked sublimely into the room, followed on tiptoe by the little be-cardinalled general, his admiring uncle,—Lord Launceston affected to mistake the inspired damsel in her shaggy drapery for some Caribbean queen escaped from her wigwam, and in pursuit of a human meal.

"She certainly must belong to one of the cannibal tribes," he exclaimed aloud: while Sir Brooke Rawleigh by way of cover to the impertinence of his brother-in-law, advanced towards Laura's lover and intreated him to do justice to the charms of his Brenda in an impromptu sonnet.

"To heavenly themeth thublimier thwainth belong."

lispd the lyrical lord;—and the band again striking up, the procession returned into the gallery.

## CHAPTER XII.

You to whom nature  
 Gave with a liberal hand most excellent form,  
 With education, language, and discourse  
 And judgment to distinguish ; when you shall  
 With feeling sorrow understand how wretched  
 And miserable you have made yourself,  
 And but yourself have nothing to accuse,  
 —Can you with hope, from any beg compassion?

THE LITTLE FRENCH LAWYER.

THE morning sun was shining brightly on the roses and pinks in Lady Rawleigh's dressing-room window when, being at length disencumbered of her Scottish costume and Mrs. Pasley's attendance, she threw herself down on the sofa,—in the luxurious ease of solitude, and a cambric peignoir ;—to enjoy the freshness of the air, and meditate over the signs and wonders of the clamorous crowd at Calder House from which she had just escaped.

The fragrance of the early morn is a long-established theme for the eloquence of all budding poets, heroines of a vicarage breakfast-table, and worshippers of sweet syllabub and sweet sentiment throughout the world. The hayfield, —the bean-field,—the hawthorn-hedge,—the rose just washed in a shower, and the woodbine just budding in a bower,—have had honourable mention in all collections of select poetry,—whether invested in calf "for the use of schools," or invested in morocco and albumtabby, for the use of lords and ladies afflicted with a dull country-house or a procrastinating cook. But not the most sensitive of these ode-ous minstrels,—not the most unsophisticated hedger and ditcher of England's fifty-two counties,—not the white-robed damsel of the parsonage,—not the "kwinthon-wobed Petwaach of of the Capitol,"—was ever half so skilled to appreciate the charms of "the incense-breathing morn," as a London fine lady, escaping from the effluvia of expiring lamps, dying tapers, fading flowers, and stale Eau de Cologne, to the fresh breeze of the early day, and the silence of her own chamber.

Frederica had been often conscious of the relief produced on the fête-fevered frame by a similar vicissitude ; had often refreshed her brow from the dust of the crowded festival

by a cooling ablution :—had often thrown open her window, to enjoy an atmosphere still pure from the sooty exhalations of fifty-thousand hearths,—still unshaken by the vociferation of a million and a half of human beings.—But never had she felt so agreeably released from the sense of moral and physical oppression as when,—exchanging the motley glare of the Calder masque for the calm seclusion of home,—she leant her cheek upon her hand, to muse over the miracles of the night.

There appeared no solution to its mysteries,—no end to its annoyances ! From the coldness of Sir Brooke's demeanour towards her, to the alarming warmth of Lord Calder's devotion,—from her brother's nonchalance, to Lady Sophia's officious interference,—from Miss Elbany's unabashable presumption, to Leonora's childish infatuation,—all was inexplicable—all distressing !

While Lady Blanche, and Lady Barbara, and Louisa Erskyne, and others still more fair, still more artful, still more envious, returned home burning with indignation at the honours bestowed by the lord of the revels on a personage so little resplendent as Lady Rawleigh—or as Minna Troil,—at the remembrance of Frederica in her simple robe of muslin and tartan, leading the Polonaise and sharing the velvet canopy of the royal supper table presided by Lord Calder,—and of themselves in all their bright array of gold and diamonds reduced to the total eclipse of an inferior position,—the object of their jealousy had not a thought nor a recollection to bestow on these superfluous honours. Instead of pluming herself on the distinctions of the evening, she regarded the Calder House festivities as a source of unequivocal humiliation to herself, and anxiety on the behalf of those who were dearest to her. Miss Elbany had suddenly re-appeared on the stage, as if emitted by the trap-door of a pantomime, and all her suspicions of Rawleigh were again awakening ;—and as to Leonora,—poor Leonora,—poor dear Leonora,—the business was really too deplorable, and the tears came into her own hazel eyes as she thought of it !—That ever the Honourable Lady Rawleigh of Rawleighford, should live to weep over her noble brother's infidelities to the heiress of Waddlestone and Co. !—

It is certain that people who live in the world,—or rather who never live out of the world,—are compelled to seize upon very extraordinary moments for their confidences and declarations ! There is not a third-rate belle of a second-rate country town, who would pour her soft sorrows into the bosom of a sympathising friend, in any situation less romantic than a bower full of moonlight, or a wood full of nightingales ;—there is not a small attorney throughout the world or wilds of

Yorkshire, who would offer his little self, his little business, and his little heritage to their acceptance, in any locale less purely romantic than the cowslip-sprinkled turf

Under the hawthorn in the dale.

"*Aux bords de la Durance*," the soft confession would be murmured to a guitar accompaniment; and on the lonely Carron-side, piped forth in "oaten stop or pastoral song."

But amid the vile sophistications of the metropolis, a vast deal of love and friendship is necessarily made in public;—proposals are tendered during the dismemberment of a chicken's wing;—and sentimental confidences uttered while Musard is screwing up his fiddle to concert pitch. And thus it was during Lord Calder's search after the finest *brugnon à la glace* of an extensive pyramid, for the lady of his thoughts, that he had presumed to breathe a few syllables somewhat less icy;—it was when Frederica had retired into the cool seclusion of an open window after supper, to look out on the illuminated gardens of Calder House, that Titania—having stolen away from Puck, Pease-blossom, Moth, Cobweb, and Musard,—ventured to give utterance to those acknowledgments which now brought tears into the eyes of Lady Raleigh. They had not, however, been wholly unsought on Frederica's part. Indignant to perceive the neglect evinced by Lord Launceston towards his wealthy bride, she more than hinted to Leonora her surprise that no part had been offered him or been sought by him in the Princess de Guéménée's party; and her manner was so much that of sisterly interrogation, that the Queen of the Fairies was deeply touched by her sympathy.—With blushes and faltering tones more genuine than are usually to be found at a fancy-ball—she murmured a confession that she had long been anxious for a few words of explanation with Lord Launceston's sister.

"Nothing," said poor Leonora, "would have restrained my desire to tell you all the afflicting embarrassment of my situation, but the certainty that you would consider me guilty of presumptuous familiarity. Believe me I am fully aware of the distance between us; nay! even of your own sense of its immensity. Yet so desirous am I of obtaining your good opinion, that I would venture much to explain to you the painful nature of my connexion with Lord Launceston. I am persuaded you must be aware of the truth,—that all my folly is fully known to you;—and I tremble to think of the strength and rashness of an attachment which has induced me to risk the happiness of my life on so wild a cast."

Frederica was hesitating whether to enter more fully into the subject, and in some measure open Miss Waddlestone's

eyes to the critical position of her engagement, when the name of Miss Elbany was suspended on her lips by the approach of Messrs. Dynley and Indice; who, perceiving two persons engaged in an interesting dialogue and manifestly in retreat from intrusion, considered it their duty as disagreeable members of society to interpose with all the officious importunity of idle questions and laborious attendance. Till Prince Albert made his appearance to claim his partner, they fastened a most vigilant guardianship on their victims.

But after all, neither the husband nor the lover,—the friend nor the brother,—the brother's chosen, nor the brother's rejected,—formed the most perplexing subject of Lady Rawleigh's musings.—Through some coincidence equally strange with that originating Lord Calder's sighs and Leonora's tears, Mrs. William Erskyne had taken it into her little head to appear at the fête at once in the character of Una, and of—a *dun*!—and scarcely had Indice and Dynley withdrawn their persecution, when Louisa sauntered towards her friend's retreat, and nitched herself into the window of whispers vacated by Oberon's Queen.

"I wish myself joy of the luck of finding you alone, Frederica," said she, passing her hand through her own silken ringlets, and affecting a yawn of exhaustion to conceal her embarrassment. "I have called on you twice within these three days (like Howell and James's collecting clerk), with my 'small account';—but whether you were riding with your new duenna, Lady Sophia, or had preternatural warnings of an unpaid bill,—certes you remained invisible."

"You imagine then that my sentence of not at home is framed in contradiction to the usual terms, and runs 'No *exclusion* except on business?' "

"Such at least is my own; and I think, or once thought, that there exists some little sympathy between our whims, and fancies, and follies!"

"And your small account is doubtless a calendar of horses hired, and pâtés devoured on the race-course?—I am really ashamed to have overlooked it so long," said Lady Rawleigh, wishing to avoid a prolongation of this branch of her giddy friend's discourse.

"By no means;—*that* account is of the tiniest dimensions, —a mere paltry fifteen guineas, and scarcely worth a visit of explanation, No! my dear; the grand affair is the-Opera. The season being in its penultimate month, Laporte is obliged to gather together his credits and debits; and ours, I am ashamed to say, amounts in its united enormity to three hundred pounds, as you will perceive by the circular letter which I must send you to-morrow. I am very certain, that two hundred was the sum originally specified;—I could not have been

so grossly mistaken. But I find, on inquiring, that *three* is the universal price paid by our neighbours; and I conclude we had better surrender with a good grace in the first instance, where we are certain of ultimate defeat. I have promised to remit the money to the treasurer the beginning of next week."

Now the heaven-born Una was too deeply intent on vindicating her own error, or her own deception in the amount of the claim, to observe the change effected on Frederica's countenance by this intelligence; and even had she noticed that Minna assumed as deathlike a paleness as if Cleveland had that moment announced his lawless vocation, Louisa Erskyne would have found it difficult to conceive that a person at once so opulent and prudent as Rawleigh's bride and Lady Launceston's only daughter, could be at any moment deficient in cash. At one time she had half intended to beg the remaining hundred and fifty, her own portion of the debt, as a loan from her friend; when a recollection of those rumoured losses at Ash Bank which had reached her ears through her friend and gossip Lady Barbara, suggested the possibility of a refusal. She had therefore hastened to levy her supplies in a far more dangerous quarter; and having now exonerated herself from the stigma of a wilful mis-statement of the price of the opera-box, had neither suspicion of nor interest in the disorder in which her carelessness might have produced in Frederica's finances.

"I was not prepared for so large a sum," was Lady Rawleigh's reply, and uttered with the tranquillity of despair; "but if you consider the claim a fair one, I will take care not to disappoint you. How very handsome Lady Rochester is looking to-night," she continued, in order to evade a further chapter on finance. "She grows younger and prettier than Lady Wandesford."

"Yes! her own efforts do Delcroix ample justice;—no one is half so religious in her adoration of 'the cosmetic powers.' Calder, I perceive, has assisted her splendour with the family casket for this occasion, and made her at once the queen of diamonds and the queen of hearts. By the way, my dear Fred., who is the amphibious monster, half-mermaid, half-maniac, appended to your group?—Is she intended as a foil to Minna or to Brenda,—or is it Lord Launceston's tutor in disguise,—or Captain Cleveland's master's mate?"

"It is Lady Sophia Lee's Swiss footman, as you are probably well aware," replied Lady Rawleigh in the same bantering vein. "We fancied he might be useful in the crowd."

"I should have thought Lord Calder's attendance would have insured *your* safety," said Louisa in a tone of pique.

"He has been attached like a bailiff to your footsteps the whole evening."

"To follow up your ingenious simile, you had better intrust him with the interest of your 'small account,'" observed her friend, rising from her seat, in order to terminate the conversation.

"Indeed!—has he so soon been installed the master of your mint?—After all, you very prudish people do most outrageous things in the world!" But a whole current of impertinence was arrested on her bitter lips, by the opportune arrival of Sir Brooke Rawleigh and Lady Sophia;—one of whom she systematically avoided from dislike, and the other from awe. They came to inquire for Norna and the Pirate, and to propose departure;—and thus ended Lady Rawleigh's evening of joy and triumph,—and such was the concluding distress which embittered her matin cogitations on her return to the dressing-room!—

Ye garrulous London sparrows!—who append your procreant cradles to the coignes of vantage of Nash's Palmyrene capitals, and torture us with premature chirpings;—ye Gaelic milk-maids! who deposit at our doors your jangling pails;—ye nigrescent cupids of Erebus! whose shrill announcements and pungent sacks importunately recall the beneficence of May-day Montagu;—ye water-carts, who slake the thirsty streets with your Grand Junction tears, and shake them with your rumbling wheels,—ye panniered dispensers of our daily bread, or daily rolls,—ye single knocks, obnoxious to the ear of the fashionable bankrupt,—why can ye not delay for an hour or two your concert of harsh discords and displeasing sharps on the morning succeeding a fête!—The sleepless beauty cherishing the imaginary echoes of the soft whisper of tenderness so long anticipated, so quickly evanescent,—Lady Rawleigh conning over her unpaid bills,—Lord George hammering over his unfinished sonnet,—unite in reviling your importunate clamour, and exclaiming with the bard that "ye murder sleep!"—It was not till the progress of time had set in motion the demie-fortunes of the early apothecaries, that Frederica had closed her eyes on her afflictions and determinations to apply to her mother for advice and assistance;—it was not till the afternoon sunshine had brought out the butterflies of fashion, that she opened them again on Pasley's announcement that Lord Launceston was waiting for her in the drawing-room.

Languid and dispirited, she hurried through her toilet in the certainty that her brother was come to magnify the measure of her vexations by some untoward announcement;—perhaps of his rupture with Titania,—perhaps of his engagement to Miss Elbany;—for Lady Sophia had only too justly

taxed Frederica with a habit of hazarding exaggerated anticipations.

"My dear Fred.!" cried her brother, dropping the Morning Post to take her offered hand,—*"I am come to throw myself on your mercy; and in case you should harden your heart against me, to bully you into commiseration. It is now useless to deny your connivance in Lucy's plots,—the affair of last night convinces me you have been in her confidence throughout;—and unless you choose to explain the whole truth and reveal your fair friend, whether as fiend or angel,—prepare for my worst vengeance as a brother and an enemy."*

"And can you really imagine," cried Frederica, *"that I am sufficiently blind or indifferent to your interests to have any share in the plans and projects of such a person? You must apply to mamma, or Rawleigh, or the Lees, for any information you may require;—I have learned nothing on the subject, but that a blank card was procured for her from Lord Calder through the interference of Lady Sophia. Had I been previously apprized of the fact, believe me nothing would have induced me to appear at the fête in connexion with an obscure adventurer, whose conduct naturally produces very unfavourable impressions of her character."*

"Ladies, my dear sister, who live of their own free choice in intimate association with the Mrs. Erskynes and Lady Blanches of the day, would do well to moderate the ferocity of their prudery. You have nothing to urge against Lucy but her poverty, which compels her to accept a situation in our family unworthy her talents and her excellence."

"And which she prudently turns to account by entangling the affections of the son of her patroness, and accepting the caresses of her son-in-law!"

"What do you mean to insinuate, Frederica!" cried Lord Launceston starting from the sofa with an air of stern heroism which would have done infinite credit to his Pirate of the preceding night.

"To *insinuate*—nothing; but simply to assert that your immaculate Lucy was detected by two ladies—(not Mrs. Erskyne and Lady Blanche, but two women whose respectability equals their rank)—"

"Go on,—go on!—of what use is that idle parenthesis? was detected, you say?"—

"—In the act of blushing her approval, while Sir Brooke Rawleigh covered her hand with kisses."

"Insolent blockhead!"

"Such are the consequences of familiarity with persons of Miss Elbany's intriguing character;—and you must at least allow me to doubt the propriety of admitting them into—"

"The chaste society of Lady Rochester! But pray what explanation does your husband offer for his folly?"

"I have sought none; having been bound by a promise to my informant to take no further steps in the affair."

"I always entertain the worst opinion of your sneaking, hypocritical, prosing, proper-behaved gentlemen!" cried Launceston in a rage. "Were I not fettered by my unfortunate engagements to the Waddlestone family—"

"Unfortunate!" interrupted his sister. "Leonora is only too good and too charming to be sacrificed in a manner so unworthy."

"By Heavens! she is an angel!" exclaimed Launceston, in the honesty of his enthusiasm. "But believe me—"

No further demand, however, was destined to be made on Lady Rawleigh's credence;—for at that moment, Sir Brooke burst into the room,—his face as white as death,—his lips quivering;—and with an air as little "sneaking, hypocritical, or prosaic," as that of the most improper-behaved gentleman in London. Launceston, who had cherished a strong previous inclination to knock him down on occasion of their first encounter, was actually startled into silence by his obvious distress and agitation.

"May I inquire," said the disordered baronet, addressing Frederica in a low but concentrated voice, "whether you can remember to whom you paid the bill and bank-note you received from Rugge?"

"To—to Lord Calder!" faltered Lady Rawleigh, growing almost as pale as her husband.

"I thank you," replied Sir Brooke, placing himself in a chair from mere inability to stand. "I thank you for your prompt candour;—I thank you, Frederica, for your consideration for my honour,—your tenderness for your own reputation;—your self-denial amid the temptations of society;—your eagerness to deserve my confidence. I thank you,—I thank you," he cried—involuntarily smiting his forehead with his clenched hand—"for showing me to the whole world as the poor, degraded, miserable fool I am!"—

"What the devil do you mean!" cried the intemperate Launceston,—his previous displeasure excited to fury by this inexplicable attack upon his sister. "If you have any serious charge to make against Lady Rawleigh,—I am here, —ready to—"

"Launceston!" said Sir Brooke, with great feeling and some dignity, "This is no time for foolish bluster. Had Frederica's conduct incurred what *you* would call a serious charge, or if I used the word dishonour in its worst sense,—you had not found me in her presence or in your's;—we could not have met again under this roof. But when I find

my wife engaged in secret transactions of a pecuniary nature with a man of the most notoriously licentious character—”

“Allow me to say, Sir,” cried Lord Launceston,—perceiving that Frederica was incapable of uttering a syllable,—“that there is nothing peculiarly secret in an affair transacted under the observation of some two hundred individuals. However blameable my sister’s losses at play, they were incurred in the presence of the whole party at Ash Bank, and in some degree at the instigation, or through the folly of Lady Olivia.”

“PLAY!” murmured poor Rawleigh,—who had long looked upon écarté as one of the darling snares spread by Satan for the entrapment of womankind. “My wife a gambler!—Lady Rawleigh branded with the shame of so gross a vice!” and he literally shuddered at the idea.

“A single error,—a solitary inadvertence,—repented of, and unrepeatd, scarcely deserves this violence,” said Lord Launceston, bluntly; for his recent discovery of Rawleigh’s peccadilloes served in a great measure to extenuate in *his* opinion the folly or criminality of his sister. “Frederica’s indiscretion on this occasion—”

“Has sufficed,” cried Sir Brooke, “to expose her to the censures of the world, and place an irrevocable stigma on her reputation. The whole affair must instantly become public. The servant to whom Lady Rawleigh intrusted the confidential letter containing the utmost of her debts, has feloniously embezzled the money,—will die on the gallows;—while I—”

He paused;—for a deep groan and heavy fall on the floor, announced that poor Frederica had dropped from her seat in a state of insensibility!—

## CHAPTER XIII.

Mais que diable alloit-elle faire dans cette galère ?

MOLIERE.

THE explanation given by Sir Brooke Rawleigh to his impetuous brother-in-law, when the delinquent had recovered sufficiently to be removed to her own room and Mrs. Pasleys' wondering sympathy, was somewhat more coherent, though by no means more satisfactory, than that which had proved so overwhelming to poor Lady Rawleigh.

It appeared that the identical Mr. Thomas who had dealt so unceremoniously with Mameluke's mouth, and even with Lord Launceston himself on occasion of Lord Calder's mysterious visit in the absence of Sir Brooke, was the servant delegated by his lady to convey her letter and enclosure to Calder-house ; and that having been trained, as has been already observed, in services of the highest fashion, he was unwilling to remain ignorant on a point already so much in dispute in the various still-rooms and servants'-halls of his acquaintance, as the intimacy between "my lord" and "my lady." The under-housemaid in Bruton-street had expressed some curiosity on the subject ; and Lord Calder's own man was by no means indifferent. In short, his deliberations ended with opening the letter : and after ceding to this first temptation,—in appropriating the contents to his own use ! —Having thrown off Sir Brooke's livery on pretext of visiting a dying parent, and speedily dissipated the fifty and twenty-pound notes, Mr. Thomas was at length induced to present the bank-bill,—and was now in custody on suspicion of theft. Lady Rawleigh in her ignorance of business having omitted to endorse the document, and the embezzler being unable to give a satisfactory account of the mode by which it came into his possession, he was detained for further investigation of the affair. "Frederica Rawleigh," in whose favour the bill was drawn, was accordingly summoned to appear in Bow-street ; and eleven o'clock on the following morning was appointed by the solicitor to the Bank for the re-examination of the parties. Nothing in short could be more distressing than the publicity and peculiarities of the case ; and Lord Launceston could not but sympathize in the profound mortification of his brother-in-law, on becoming first

acquainted with his wife's indiscretions through so afflicting a channel.

But what were the feelings of poor Frederica herself, when having summoned her brother to her dressing-room, she was gradually and considerably made acquainted with the particulars of the affair! Her first grief naturally arose from finding herself the indirect cause of a fellow-creature's guilt;—a fellow-creature's ignominious death;—her next, from her husband's deep and merited displeasure:—her last, from the discovery that Lord Calder's increased familiarity of demeanour towards her had proceeded from a belief that she was in his power,—his debtor without compunction or apology. Deeply did she loathe and repent the folly which had placed her in so dishonoured a position!

Nor was the business amended when, after a visit to Gray's-inn (and poor Sir Brooke could not but revert to the motives of his frequent journeys towards that factory of "deeds without a name" during his pin-money-and-jointure deliberations the preceding year), the husband and brother ascertained that her ladyship's personal appearance was indispensable; and that Lord Calder himself would be required to give evidence and prosecute, as one of the defrauded parties!—Lord Launceston who felt, in spite of his constitutional levity and inconsideration, the urgent necessity of strict prudence in conducting the affair, and of adopting for Frederica's sake every measure likely to diminish its publicity, wisely laid aside his repugnance to Calder House and its proprietor, and hastened thither to explain the dilemma, and request his lordship's co-operation. He found the garlands, and triumphal arches, and temporary orchestras in the act of removal, and the mansion still uncleared from its decorations of the preceding night. But Lord Launceston's name proved a spell insuring immediate admittance; and he was ushered into a little secluded book-room, untouched by the disorders of the recent fête, and at all times secure from the intrusion of worldly clamours and importunate visitors.

There is perhaps no moment in which the charm of high-breeding is so strongly felt, as that which compels a person to seek a concession from one by birth or accident his superior, whose good-will he has never previously sought to conciliate. Lord Launceston was aware that he had demeaned himself, on many occasions, with singular ungraciousness towards the proprietor of the gorgeous palace and unpretending but exquisite chamber into which he was now introduced; but from the moment of Lord Calder's entrance, he found himself not only placed perfectly at his ease, but taught to feel that he was conferring a favour by asking one. Launceston was truly and fervently attached to his sister!—Her

marriage and his own engagements had, it is true, in some measure interfered with the course of their warm and exclusive attachment; and for some weeks past he had even begun to consider her more as the fashionable Lady Rawleigh, than his own dear gentle little Frederica; but no sooner was she menaced with misinterpretation, and surrounded by vexations, than he remembered her only as the tender, timid, relying sister, who had loved him so fondly throughout her various stages of childhood, girlhood, and womanhood;—whose name, and fame, and heart's-blood were so intimately kindred with his own.

On finding, therefore, in Lord Calder, an eager participator in his anxiety to spare her feelings and render this unpleasant affair as private as possible, he experienced a momentary conviction that the courteous and well-bred brother of Lady Rochester was a far more civilized member of the community, than that brother-in-law of his own, whom he had left behind in Bruton-street, raging and storming against the iniquities of *écarté*; and expressing a conscientious opinion that the interests of society ought not to be compromised by any remission of the rigours of the law towards so gross an abuser of trust as his felonious footman. Everything appeared in Lord Calder's favour on such an occasion;—his assumed forgetfulness of the original debt, and of Lady Rawleigh's apparently wilful breach of promise of payment;—his easy mode of proposing an adjustment of the affair;—his indifference to public justice in comparison with the private feelings of an innocent woman;—his quiet tone and unexaggerated expressions of regret at the whole transaction;—all these superficial accomplishments acquired from the embarrassment of the moment an unusual degree of importance in the eyes of his visitor;—and Lord Launceston left the house with a newly-conceived prejudice in favour of those

Men of the world who know the world like men!

Having made an appointment to drive down with Lord Calder to Bow-street on the following morning, his next visit was addressed to a personage who, although what is termed a *woman* of the world, was in fact as little skilled in the arts and sciences of modern society, and as ill-qualified to enter into the manœuvres of the war of fashion, as Anna Boleyn to grace the lists of Almack's, or Anne Askew to encounter the debates of a Tract Association. Nor was poor Launceston insensible to that deficiency of tact and the redundancy of mental and bodily activity which rendered Lady Olivia Tadcaster so unsuitable a comforter to the sorrowful, or assistant to the perplexed. But he was unwilling to circulate the af-

fair beyond the limits of his own family, or wholly to abandon Frederica to the angry counsels of Sir Brooke; and although satisfied that Lady Sophia Lee would have been a far more satisfactory companion to his sister, he was too well acquainted with the lofty spirit and scornful independence of that lady, to promote an altercation between her and Rawleigh. Lord Launceston rightly conjectured that Lady Olivia's love of business-discussions, and predilection for the circumstantialities of life, would peremptorily divert his brother-in-law's attention and indignation from his wife and her offences.

He was secure, too, from all personal reluctance and awkwardness in communicating the business to his fussy aunt,—who, in some measure originated the mischief; and had his delicate recoiled from the task, would have been quickly reassured by the nature of Lady Olivia's comments on the transaction. After listening with due attention to the details of Frederica's misfortunes and misconduct, her ladyship exclaimed—"She certainly must have lost her senses!—Heavens!—that a niece of mine should venture two hundred and eighty pounds against an experienced player like Lord Calder;—and afterwards show herself so ignorant of business as to pay away a bank-bill without endorsement!"

But even Lord Launceston was little aware, when he left his sister to the exhortations of the aunt whom he had easily persuaded to accompany him back to Bruton-street, how often her self-upbraidings would be interrupted,—her anticipations of the criminal penalty incurred by the culprit answered, by—"But what in the name of wonder, my dear, could induce you to pay away a bank-bill without endorsement?"

Meanwhile his Lordship was not inactive. Through the mediation of Messrs. Marwill and Makewill, the examination of Thomas Cuthbert was appointed to be held in the magistrates' private room; and everything was whispered by this kind brother to Lady Rawleigh in the course of the preceding evening, which could be supposed to dissipate her alarms. Sir Brooke was opportunely called away to the House by important business; while her brother seemed to have forgotten in Frederica's distress that there existed in the universe a Lucy or a Leonora, and to feel no hopes or fears beyond those in which her immediate interests were involved. He left her with an entreaty that she would restore her courage by a good night's rest, and a hope that the affair might be compromised without further exposure; and Lady Olivia, whom he insisted on conducting to her carriage previous to his own departure, only added to his exhortation, "and pray, my dear niece, impress upon your recollection that you have caused all this embarrassment by omitting to endorse a bank-bill."

Lady Rawleigh's tribulations on the morrow began at an

early hour. In spite of all her hints, Launceston had persisted in intercepting an interview between the husband and wife, by inviting the lady of Ash Bank to breakfast with his sister and support her by matronly countenance during her visit to Bow-street; and so seldom in the course of her aristocratical existence had Lady Olivia been blest by an occasion to penetrate into an atmosphere so congenial with her taste as that of a magistrate's private room,—or to enjoy the exciting prospect of hanging a dishonest footman,—that she would not listen to the excuses of her niece. Before nine of the clock she found her way to Frederica's bedside; to commiserate her swollen eyelids and pallid cheeks, and to remind her again of the absurdity of forgetting to endorse a bank-bill.

But Lady Rawleigh was scarcely conscious of her aunt's superfluous iteration of the charge! She could think of nothing but her coming humiliations; from her first encounter with an offended husband, to her final appearance before an implacable dispenser of the law. She was not aware that during Lady Olivia's tête-à-tête dinner with Sir Brooke the preceding day her elaborate details of the écarté affair at Ash Bank had in a great measure tended to exculpate her niece; and that although he could pin no very sure reliance on the representations of a woman who considered the non-endorsement of Rugg's bill the chief source of vexation in the case, he was now satisfied that his wife was neither an habitual nor a clandestine gambler; that she had been decoyed to the écarté table in obedience to her aunt; and had communicated the disastrous result to more than one member of her own family. The precarious state of Lady Launceston's health would have rendered it as injudicious to consult *her* on the original, as on the present occasion;—and as to himself—the meditations of four-and-twenty hours convinced him that his recent demeanour towards Frederica had been very ill calculated to conciliate her confidence and smooth the path of confession.

His displeasure being mollified by these considerations, he met her with a brow less moody and an address less frigid than she had anticipated. During their unpleasant drive to Bow-street, the few words that passed between them were of a friendly nature; and both parties were too deeply engrossed, to resent or answer Lady Olivia's cuckoo admonitions to her niece on the subject of an accurate endorsement of all future bank-bills. •

"The only use of a bank-bill, my dear," said she, as the carriage stopped before a dirty entrance, redolent of gin and tobacco, surrounded by a human group personifying the seven deadly sins seven times repeated, and guarded by one or two

officers with eyes as keen as lynxes, and hands as brisk and active as those of a ring-tailed Maucauca—"the only use, my dear Frederica, of a bank-bill, is to secure from fraud all private money-transactions between persons at a distance. Had you endorsed that bill, or if Mr. Ruggs had done his duty by instructing you on the subject—"

"This way, ladies, if you please!—The gemmen and the 'torneys is a waiting!" interrupted an officer with a staff, or rather a staff with an officer,—for the virtue of office appeared peculiarly resident in the baton; and after groping their way through a fetid passage, Frederica found her hand pressed in her brother's,—while Lord Calder silently placed a chair for her accommodation in the least ostensible corner of the room, from whence her replies could be made audible in the proper quarter. For some minutes, indeed, both the room and its inmates became indistinguishable to her swimming eyes; while her bosom panted as though the heart within would burst its bounds. But Frederica had promised herself to repress her emotions,—to exert her utmost efforts to evade a scene of feminine weakness on so unpromising a stage,—and, if possible, collect her courage sufficiently to yield all the evidence in her power in favour of the wretched delinquent. On recovering her self-possession, she perceived the unhappy man standing opposite closely attended by two familiars of the office, and wearing on his livid lips and sallow brow strong accusations of vice, if not of crime;—the leprosy of sin had already put its mark upon his hardened face!—Frederica felt her heart grow sick at the mere sight of the man.—For many months past he had been her habitual attendant. She had seen him last in the trimly array and powdered neatness peculiar to the menials of a respectable establishment; and already he had contracted that swaggering air of brutality which is the unfailing concomitant of low debauchery. Involuntarily the idea presented itself to her mind of the hangman busy with the miserable being before her;—and of a wife, a child, a mother, or a friend, torn in agony from his arms.—With difficulty she repressed the shriek that rose to her lips; wringing her hands in the terrible conviction that her folly had been the inadvertent cause of all this guilt,—of this appalling retribution!

The tissue of fashionable life is of so flimsy and artificial a texture,—so little of reality exists in the position, sentiments, and apprehensions of the lordly community, that crimes and punishments assume an ideal and visionary character in the eyes of its members. They read or hear of criminal justice,—of the pangs of hunger,—of theft, conviction, sentence, and execution, and regard the whole as a melodramatic source of sympathy and horror. The burglar, the

forger, and the incendiary have no stronger individuality in their conception than the Mr. Beverleys and George Barnwells, in whose behalf their cambric handkerchiefs are moistened at the theatre;—their own hearts are too buoyant, their own destinies too unsubstantial, to impart a belief in the tangible existence of want, and crime, and judgment.

But when a person hitherto surrounded by the sparkling and unreal brilliancy of unqualified prosperity, stumbles by chance on some of those terrible monuments which suggest the positive existence of penury and suffering,—of criminality and condemnation,—the impression is indeed powerful. Sickness and danger are generally the sole monitors which speak home to the breasts of the rich and great touching their own responsibility, and the equality of all created beings in the eyes of the Creator; but a malefactor incited to guilt through their own carelessness or bad example,—a life forfeited to the law of the land and unredeemable by their utmost efforts and intercessions,—is a lesson of more than common severity. Lady Rawleigh, who would not willingly have caused the extermination of a fly, felt with a thrill of icy horror, that she was about to plunge a fellow-creature into the dread abyss of eternity!—

Under this awful impression of the critical importance of the scene, it may be imagined with what amazement she found her attention facetiously claimed by a gentleman in a rusty black coat, very indifferently furnished with his Majesty's English, and very superabundantly endowed with his Majesty's authority. In honour of the distinguished audience gracing his presence, he had prepared an unusual stock of jocularity and repartee for the occasion; and it was not till he had been in some degree influenced by the chilling dignity of Lord Calder's address that he found it wise to restrict himself within the bounds of an amiable candour and impartiality;—calling the prisoner "my friend," instead of "fellow;"—and Lord Calder "my lud," instead of "this noble and injured individooal."

But as few minor officials emulate the originality and comicality of the Procurator Fiscal and Daddie Rat, it may be as well to leave the tribunal of the Heart of Mid Lothian in solitary but triumphant possession of the field of fiction.—Lady Olivia, it is true, exhibited in her proper person at once the pragmatical officiousness of Saddletree, and the demented incoherence of Madge Wildfire; and to many persons, —Lord Calder in particular,—Frederica herself might have rivalled the attractions of either Effie or Jeannie Deans. But his lordship, as he gazed upon her silently-dropping tears, and marble immobility, was far more tempted to compare

her with Byron's description of Prince Azo's guilty wife;—more especially when, on learning that the examination was postponed and the prisoner remanded till a future day to enable Mr. Ruggs to make his appearance and identify the bill, as well as for the determination of some legal doubts as to the extent of Cuthbert's amenability to the law,—she suddenly clasped her hands together, and uttered an unconscious prayer that the culprit's life might be secured through the informality thus suggested!—

## CHAPTER XIV.

Scandal, a busy fiend, in truth's disguise,  
 Like Fame, all cover'd o'er with ears and eyes,  
 Learns the fond tale, and spreads it as she flies:  
 Nor spreads alone, but alters, adds, defames;—  
 Affects to pity, though her duty blames;  
 Pretends to weigh the fact in even scale,  
 And wish, at least, that justice may prevail;  
 Insinuates, dissembles, lies, betrays—  
 Plays the whole hypocrite such various ways,  
 That innocence itself must suffer wrong,  
 And honour bleed, the prey of Slander's tongue.

SOAME JENYNS.

FREDERICA was still lying on the feverish couch to which she had been consigned on her return from the police-office, when towards evening the following note from Lord Calder was placed in her hands :

"Dear Lady Rawleigh,

"The amiable solicitude you expressed this morning for the fate of Thomas Cuthbert, has induced me to consult several eminent professional men in his behalf; and three leading counsel, as well as my friends the Vice Chancellor and Attorney-General, having given it as their opinion that the bill, without endorsement, was an invalid document and destitute of any real value, the solicitor of the Bank has withdrawn his charge. With very sincere regret that this unpleasant business should have caused you one moment's concern,

I am, dear Madam,

Your ladyship's obedient servant,

CALDER."

"Calder House, Saturday."

The transition of feeling arising from the welcome intelligence thus kindly imparted, was almost too much for Frederica's gentle frame, already shaken by the vicissitudes of three eventful days, and the vigils of three sleepless nights. Her tears burst forth with hysterical violence;—she pressed to her heart the official papers enclosed by Lord Calder in corroboration of his statement;—and uttered a thousand incoherent exclamations. She was no longer capable of self-restraint, and her mind became involved in darkness. Her latest remembrance was that of strangers surrounding her

bedside; and when her consciousness was fully restored, she found that a night and a day had elapsed in feverish delirium, and that her brother and husband were affectionately watching the progress of her recovery.

"I have been lightheaded—have I not?" she faintly exclaimed; involuntarily extending her hand to Sir Brooke, who very voluntarily, and very tenderly pressed it to his lips, imploring her to desist from all agitating inquiries.

"No—no!—I am well and happy now;—all my pains and troubles are over!" faltered Frederica. "I feel as if I had passed through some great danger,—or experienced some severe affliction.—Let me see—ah! I remember now—I recollect it all now.—After all, it *was* no dream!"

And she hid her face with her hands while Rawleigh again implored her to dismiss the past from her thoughts; and her brother still more judiciously began to introduce topics of general conversation;—to talk to her of Lady Launceston's health,—of Lady Olivia's project of a tour to St. Petersburg,—and of Lady Twadell's report that Lord Trevelyan had actually arrived in England.—Lady Rawleigh, grateful for his efforts to withdraw her attention from herself, tried to appear interested in these announcements; and with her eyes fixed upon the altered and kindly expression of her husband's countenance, enjoyed all that languid sensation of convalescence which the release from pain, and gratitude for the interest it has excited in those we love, render so exquisitely delightful.

Meanwhile Rumour, with her thousand lying tongues, had not been inactive. The season was drawing near its close, without having afforded anything very striking either in the way of gaiety or scandal. The Faëry masque was not only over, but had already become an obsolete theme,—and nothing promising remained in prospect but the *elettissimo* breakfast at Waddlestone House;—Lady A. was dead, Lady B. divorced, and both forgotten,—and nothing animating appeared in view but the martyrdom of the lovely Lady Rawleigh of Rawleighford. Even her intimate associates might be forgiven some little eagerness for the struggle, for should she escape the amphitheatre unhurt by the venomous fangs of the "blatant beast,"—untransfixed by the javelin of scandal,—they had not the least chance of any other source of diversion or excitement previous to their mournful departure to the domestic happiness of their divers country seats!—

Under these circumstances, it is not wonderful that Lady Blanche's Thornton's maid on calling to inquire of Mrs. Pasley "quite promiscuously," whether it was true that they were to have the pleasure of meeting at Leamington previous

to the Warwick races, should lend an eager ear to the account of "my lady's sudden seizure all along of them low fellows the footmen opening a confidential letter addressed by her ladyship to Lord Calder,"—and a magnifying tongue to her own repetition of the story in Belgrave-square;—or that Mr. Indice on meeting Lord Calder and Launceston at the premature hour of eleven, ensconced in the mysterious dark green chariot, should have suspected a duel, followed them in his cabriolet to Bow-street, and propagated a whisper on his return to White's that Lady Rawleigh, under the countenance of her brother and aunt, and supported by the testimony of Lord Calder, had been exhibiting articles of the peace against her husband! In the dog-days, scandal, like every other pestilence, becomes imminently contagious; and long before Thomas Cuthbert's sentence of enlargement was pronounced, Frederica was condemned, executed, and given over to Surgeons' Hall by a jury of her fashionable friends; whose forewoman—Mrs. William Erskyne,—affected to weep while she delivered the impartial verdict!—

Lady Sophia Lee, however, was too slightly entangled in the meshes of the great world, to be either implicated or interested in this decree of the court. She knew nothing of Lady Rawleigh's disastrous adventures; and attributed her avoidance of their daily ride to Frederica's displeasure at her interference in the Elbany affair. Engrossed just then by important business of her own, she had no leisure to offer the necessary explanations; but having occasion to call in Charles-street, was quite satisfied with Lady Launceston's repetition of the tale she had received from her son, that "Fred. had caught a slight cold at Calder House, and was nursing it for the Waddlestone breakfast," without attempting to soothe down, by premature importunity, the resentment of her cousin Brooke's indignant dame.

Great therefore was her amazement and distress when on the third day following the masque, the first tidings of the affair reached her per threepenny post, and per pen of Sophronia of Twickenham.—Lady Twadell, restless to display her new emblazonments, having joined in unharmonious union her Woodington pair of bays to the Viscount's pair of blacks, and converted her second coachman and his lordship's second footman into lumbering postilions, was making the tour of the suburbs in what she considered an imposing degree of bridal splendour; and after trying the cold chicken and sandwiches of Wimbledon and Rochampton, Hampstead and Hammersmith, had actually thought fit to travel as far as Lady Derenzy's villa, in order to improve her illuminated edition of Lady Rawleigh's disgrace. Unluckily, Sophronia had not a word to add in the way of annotation.

Her latest intelligence of her niece had been derived from Lord George Madrigal, who in his account of Lord Calder's fête had represented Frederica as

The obtherved of all obtherverth;

and from Lady Lavinia Lisle, who asserted her to have been the ruling planet of the evening. Having loftily reproved the tittle-tattle of the little viscountess whom she abhorred as a *parvenue*, Lady Derenzy followed up her lecture by inflicting an epistle of two sheets and an envelope, upon her quondam pupil, Lady Sophia; containing some immeasurable sentences of the description called rigmarole which involved the "dignity of the order,—the purity of the sex,—the spotlessness of the female character,—the folly of women who *commit themselves by writing letters*,—and the imperative necessity of hanging all footmen who open them."

The Rosetta stone could not have been more unintelligible to Lady Sophia! Her first impulse was to fly to Bruton-street, and demand a key to the hieroglyphics; and she was speedily rewarded for her reliance on her friend's good faith, by the fervour with which the still-agitated Frederica threw herself into her arms, and relieved her heart and mind by relating every particular of the affair. Her audistress did not, however, consider it necessary to emulate this amiable frankness. She was not one of those candid and agreeable persons who think it their duty that every individual should be made acquainted with every individual slander invented to their discredit; and was too well aware of the gentleness and timidity of Frederica's disposition to grieve her by the recapitulation of Lady Twadell's romances, or Lady Derenzy's rhodomontade. But Lady Sophia was not the less persuaded that the world in general had already accepted in its worst sense and stamped into currency, the history of the letter; and was therefore anxious, without wounding the feelings of Lady Rawleigh, to exert such an influence over her demeanour towards Lord Calder, as might restrain her from all public demonstrations of gratitude towards him, as well as from all evidence of private pique.

"Could you have imagined," cried Frederica, on the conclusion of her narrative, "that Calder would lay aside his apathy and selfishness, and exert himself with such promptitude in favour of a servant?"

"To forward his own ends, he would have taken as much trouble for a turnspit. Be careful, dearest Fred., be careful that he is not too amply rewarded for the effort."

"Do not alarm yourself.—Rawleigh, who by some unlucky genius for misconception, sees all his actions *en noir*, has made it a point with me that our acquaintance should

terminate as soon as possible.—Dynley, or Lexley, or Indice, or some other of his tiresome club-associates, have been careful to instil into his mind a belief that his dignity and authority as a husband, depend on his insulting Lord Calder by excluding him from our house.”

“Dynley and Indice form a dose of bitters, which the hypochondriacs of fashion seem to inflict on themselves as a universal panacea.—But like other physic, I shall take care that they are thrown to the dogs.”

“You will interfere to no good purpose. There appears a kind of hereditary feud between yourself and Rawleigh, which strengthens him in all the prejudices you oppose.”

“The man is a blockhead ;—I tell him wholesome truths, and he cannot swallow them. But on this occasion I shall insist on his treating Lord Calder with becoming courtesy.”

“My dear Lady Sophia, believe me your influence is insufficient to work such a miracle.”

“My influence ?—I would not rely on it to determine his choice of a new waistcoat !—Oh, no !—you shall have a much more potent auxiliary. I shall secure the interference of a person who has the greatest weight with Sir Brooke ;—one who will not allow him to trifle with your happiness and his own.”

Frederica started !—There was no mistaking the inference ;—there was no possibility of doubting that Miss Elbany’s influence over her husband was about to be propitiated in her favour.—Her spirit recoiled from such a degradation !

“I thank you !—I have no doubt you mean to act kindly by me,” said she with a sudden refrigeration of manner, “but I am satisfied that when a woman requires the advocacy of a partizan to mediate between herself and her husband, her cause is naught !”

“What a jealous little soul it is !” said Lady Sophia, who was already preparing for departure, and now approached to pat her cheek with a most provoking air of superiority. “Won’t it accept the assistance of such a shabby piece of goods as its mamma’s companion ?—won’t it receive a favour from its brother’s idol,—from its future sister-in-law ?”

“Miss Elbany my sister-in-law ?” cried Frederica ; “never !”

“*Si fait !*—as sure as you are in a violent rage at this very moment.”

“Do you—can you—mean to say that you anticipate such disgrace for Launceston and his family as the triumph of that low designing adventurer ?”

“I mean to say that I, at least, will leave no measure unattempted to secure the event !—Good-bye—good-bye ;—I leave you to all the sublimity of your indignation and to the

perusal of yonder trilateral billet. Preserve me from the marivaudage which requires pink satin paper to make it palatable."

She hastened away as she uttered these words; and if anything could tend to augment the vexation which they excited in the mind of Lady Rawleigh, it would have been the impertinence of the following lines:

"Brook-street, July — 1829.

"DEAR LADY RAWLEIGH,

"An unpleasant report having reached me that a sum of money forwarded to you by our friend Lord Calder has fallen into your husband's hands, or been stolen by one of your servants, I am apprehensive it may have some reference to the demand I made on you the other evening. I trust you will excuse me for reminding you that I am not only responsible for the amount, but that it will be a great inconvenience and disgrace to me to have the payment delayed; and must therefore beg you to make some arrangements with Sir Brooke on the subject as soon as possible.

I am, dear Lady Rawleigh,

Truly yours,

L. ERSKYNE."

Fortunately for Frederica's patience, Martin had already announced that the bearer of this gracious epistle did not wait for an answer; and she was therefore secure of delay for the subjugation of her anger and the arrangement of her finances. But as she paced the room for the better despatch of this double labour, how grieved, how debased in her own eyes, how harassed in mind, body and estate did the spendthrift feel amid her self rebukings.—Money!—she who had so often contemned the wisdom of the worldly,—the paltry avarice of the narrow-minded,—the base propensities of the interested,—what penalty would she not have endured, what sacrifice would she not have made for the secret acquisition of a few hundred pounds?—Oh! grievous destitution of modern times! Vainly does the bankrupt sigh and the pauper groan!—No Mercury now brings up a golden hatchet from the fountain,—no Rübezah! starts forth amid the fern with a purse of ducats,—no Abouleasem opens the vault of his hidden treasure,—no Mephistopheles whispers his demoniacal bargain!—Money,—even with the unspiritual drawback of five per cent., is sufficiently difficult of attainment; and instead of tempters with bags of gold appearing at every turn, a banker grim and impermeable as his own iron chest, secures our souls from perdition and our dividends from anticipation.—It was well for poor Frederica that Number Nip turned a deaf ear to her invocations!—

After feverishly revolving in her mind the difficulties of the case, she resolved to address a private letter to Obadiah Ruggs, requesting him to advance the sum of one hundred pounds, which would become due to her in the course of ten days; and apply to her mother for a loan of the remaining sixty-five immediately in request. She trusted the statuary would be satisfied with her promise of payment in November, and that no extraordinary demands would arise upon her pocket-money. She, who had never in her life experienced a deficiency of this description flattered herself, that she should be able to get through *three* months without a single guinea! She,

Whose kindly-melting heart,  
To every want, to every wo, —  
To guilt itself, when in distress, —  
The balm of pity would impart,  
And all relief that bounty can bestow,

fancied she could close her ears against the murmurs and grievances of all the rheumatic dames, and paralytic gaffers, her habitual pensioners in the green lanes and scattered hovels of her own dear Rawleighford!—Alas! poor Frederica!—She little imagined that her keeper of the privy purse had already a list of unpaid memoranda against her, for ribbons, needles, and all the contemptible nothings of the lady's-maid's department, to the amount of twenty pounds; and that her standing bills,—but it is needless to anticipate.

Lord Launceston and Sir Brooke, meanwhile, had exacted a promise that she would pass the evening in Charles-street to satisfy the anxiety of the dowager touching her celd; and Lady Launceston, with all her medical skill, might be excused for giving full faith to this suppositious malady, when she looked in Frederica's face and noticed the havoc which four days of unequalled anxiety had wrought in its expression. So haggard were her looks, her eyes so lustreless, her voice so tremulous, that her mother was almost tempted to inquire whether she had been rash enough to hold any further intercourse, through Lady Olivia, with Captain Mopsley and the good ship the Scarmouth Castle.

On this point, her ladyship's doubts might have been amply resolved; for scarcely were they seated for the evening,—Sir Brooke and Launceston paired off on one sofa, and Frederica reclining on the other beside the invalid, listening to a history of a dispute between Chloe and the housekeeper's cat,—when a rustling on the stairs announced a visitor, and in bustled Lady Olivia, with her country neighbours the two Miss Peewits. The gentlemen whisperingly exchanged certain impolite aspirations for their transfer to some unre-

cordable spot,—and Lady Rawleigh silently wished them all three in a better place. But poor Lady Launceston had a gracious word and smile for all her visitors, and sympathized very kindly in the motive of these Essex worthies for visiting the metropolis;—for in spite of Lady Olivia's gift of green spectacles, Miss Peewit was come to consult an oculist, and Miss Maria was bent on a private audience with Cartwright.

"You see, my dear," said Lady Olivia to her niece, as soon as her two friends had launched into these interesting explanations with their hostess, "I really did not know what to do with them, or you would not have seen me here to-night. I could not take them with me to old Lady Buntingford's where I was engaged to a *conversazione*, because they have no pretensions to blue-ism, and it happens not to be one of her Saints'-days. I wrote a note to Lord Calder, to ask him for his box at the English Opera,—but Mrs. Erskyne had been beforehand with me; and it was out of the question remaining at home,—for my house is completely *en papillote* preparatory to my departure from town;—every room papered up but my own dressing-room. So I persuaded them I was pre-engaged to my sister."

"Mamma is very glad to see them;—particularly as they come on an errand of health," replied Frederica, listlessly.

"I wish she would take it into her head to ask them to dine with her to-morrow," said the calculating Lady Olivia; "for what to do with them I know not! You see we are all engaged to the concert and *déjeuner à la fourchette* at Waddlestone House; and now that Mrs. Woodington is married, I have no convenient friend on whom I can take the liberty of quartering them. I have provided for their morning's amusement by getting an order for Lord Calder's picture-gallery;—but as to the dinner part of the business I am completely puzzled!"

"What is this history of Lady Twadell's," inquired Frederica, anxious to evade the detail of her ladyship's shabby manœuvres, "relative to my uncle Trevelyan's arrival in England?—Do you imagine that he has heard of Launceston's engagement to Miss Waddlestone, and wishes for an explanation?"

"Lady Twadell is a very gossiping, officious, little woman," said Lady Olivia, angrily. "She is so vexed by her own designs on my nephew proving abortive, that she cannot rest without circulating these mischievous inventions."

"She is only responsible for announcing the fact;—the motive was suggested by myself. But surely my uncle or Mary would have written to announce their intention?"

"Your uncle and Mary are beyond my comprehension, or

that of any other reasonable being. To say the truth, my dear Frederica, I have very great reason to complain of both. After my father's death, I had a nine years' Chancery suit with Trevelyan; and although it was given against me with costs, no person has ever doubted that I was scandalously used, and fully justifiable in my claims. My brother, however, thought proper to resent them, and make my perseverance the excuse for a personal quarrel; while your father amused himself by calling me the Widow Blackacre."

"But all that affair has been long ended and forgotten," said Lady Rawleigh, trembling in anticipation of the well-known memoirs of that terrible Chancery suit.

"Not at all, my dear, not at all!—Trevelyan has taken care to avoid me ever since. Although we were in Italy together thirteen months, he always managed to cross me on the road; to be in Sicily when I was at Naples;—at Pisa when I was at Rome. Lady Mary, it is true, keeps up a formal correspondence with me; but I have never seen my niece since she was eight years old. Well, Fred, *tel perd, tel gagne!*—you will be the better for it!—Since Lord Trevelyan and his daughter have chosen to make a stranger of me they will find that—But, my dear love, I have never seen you since the termination of that abominable transaction concerning Thomas Cuthbert!—Was there ever anything so unfortunate as your omitting to endorse the bill!—Pray let it be a warning to you another time. If you had only written your name on the back,—as any person in their senses would have done, and as that Mr. Muggs ought certainly to have instructed you to do,—there is not the smallest doubt but you might have hanged the fellow."

"Hush! my dear aunt," faltered Lady Rawleigh, "I would not for worlds have mamma distressed by hearing a word on such a subject."

"Oh! you have nothing to fear!—she is absorbed in Clara Peewit's account of an inflammatory face-ache she caught in the hard winter of 1826;—hark!—they are very busy with the ingredients of the embrocation. Well, my love, as I was saying, Mr. Marwill assures me that had you only endorsed the bill, Cuthbert was a lost man. I own I think it a scandalous thing that such a villain should be allowed to escape;—a footman who not only opens a confidential letter, but embezzles a large sum of money!—Which of us is safe!—It might be my case, you know, to-morrow;—and I have considered it my duty to the community at large, to address a letter to the Attorney-General, inquiring whether there is no law to which he might still be made amenable."

"Oh! my dear aunt!"

"And Marwill has drawn up the case for counsel's opinion."

I must say I think it was rather officious on Lord Calder's part, to act in the business without consulting any of the family: and the first time I see him I shall certainly hint my opinion that, as I acted as your personal adviser on the occasion, he might as well have paid me the compliment of ascertaining my views. In fact, it is too provoking that the fellow should have escaped punishment through the interference of a perfect stranger; and I shall make it a point to tell him so."

"Let me implore you to allow the subject to drop!—Promise me, my dear aunt, that—"

"Miss Peewit, my dear!—don't you find those candles too much for your poor eyes?—I have no doubt Wrightson could find you a shade, or a screen; or my nephew will give you up his place on the sofa.—Launceston!—make room for Miss Peewit by Sir Brooke."

But neither party seemed inclined to profit by the hint. Poor blinking Miss Peewit was in the seventh heaven of namby-pamby with her valetudinarian hostess; Lord Launceston was asking Sir Brooke's advice relative to a new mortgage on the Marston estate; and neither had the least inclination to be marched or countermarched for the gratification of her ladyship's whims.

"There is one point in which I really *must* expostulate with Sir Brooke," resumed Lady Olivia, clinging to the gratifying subject of Thomas and his felonious intentions. "Before he left the office I saw him present Lord Calder with a cheque for two hundred and eighty pounds. Now although the two hundred pound bank bill is still in your husband's possession and available, the eighty pounds in notes is gone and spent;—and if he chooses to prosecute Cuthbert for a breach of trust, he would not only have a chance of recovering the money but be enabled to transport the wretch for life; or perhaps—who knows—to hang him after all!—I *must* have a little conversation with Rawleigh."

"If you love me, my dear aunt, do not utter one syllable further on the subject; which is a most distressing one both to my husband and myself."

But Frederica's cheeks became flushed with the deepest crimson at this further discovery of pecuniary involvement. She had hitherto overlooked the circumstance of the deficit of eighty pounds,—and had every reason to apprehend that Sir Brooke, in his business-like view of the case, intended to apply the next quarter of her pin money to its re-imbursement!

Here then was an end of all her hopes of the hundred pounds to be advanced by Mister Obadiah Ruggs!—

## CHAPTER XV.

No common coxcomb must be mentioned here,  
 Nor the dull train of dancing sparks appear !  
 Nor fluttering officers who never fight ;—  
 Of such a wretched rabble who would write ?

SHEFFIELD, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

HUNGER, and cold, and nakedness, are undoubtedly among the most unwelcome casualties of human life, and both painful and difficult of endurance. But the pauperism of high life is not without an agony of its own; and whatever may be said in favour of the luxury of wo, the woes of luxury are by no means less acute than those we find concomitant with the squalor of plebeian wretchedness. There is a sentiment of personal shame connected with the destitution of fine ladies and fine gentlemen with fine feelings!—it is such a manifest self-accusation to plead poverty in excuse for the delayed payment of a bill incurred in all the wantonness of an overflowing purse,—that the eye quails and the voice falters before the appalling presence of the humble individual to whom so vile a plea is tendered.—“Inconvenience at the present moment,”—“disappointments in my rents,”—“unexpected calls on my ready money,”—are pretty generally recognized as the mere lame apologies of unjustifiable prodigality!—

But Frederica Rawleigh was more than commonly sensitive to the dishonour of such proceedings. Educated by a mother, who, notwithstanding the seeming indolence and listlessness of her mode of life, maintained the strictest regularity in her domestic affairs,—and in spite of a seeming inanity of mind, fulfilled with righteous diligence every duty of her sex,—she had been wholly unused to the sight of disorder, or to the anxieties of pecuniary embarrassment. She had never, it is true, been dinned with lectures on extravagance; but had received a still better lesson in the orderly simplicity of Lady Launceston's habits; while those in which she had been personally trained were such as to render wasteful profusion an evidence of madness in her estimation rather than a fault.

And she was now to endure the self-conviction of this error of judgment, in all its multiplicitious martyrdom!—Circumstances unnoticed before, began to start up in frightful pro-

minence for her accusation; and a thousand trifles light as air grew oppressive with the leaden weight affixed by conscience to their insignificance. On arriving at home after her unsatisfactory explanation with Lady Olivia, she found three letters lying on the hall-table, closed in all the commercial odium of waferhood, and bearing her superscription flourished in all the suspicious perfection of the clerkly art. At any other time they would have been mechanically opened and thrown aside; but now, a cold dew moistened her brow as the horrors of an unpaid and unpayable bill first occurred to her imagination: and she not only conveyed them unexamined as far as her dressing-room, but actually waited to be relieved from Mrs. Pasley's inquisition, before she ventured to unclothe the dreaded page for the perusal of those tremendous perpendicular columns—marshalled in the fatal array of red ink, and dated with accurate and insulting minuteness,—which show more terrible to the eye of the prodigal than the columns of the British forces to the imperial fugitive of Waterloo!—

On the present occasion Lady Rawleigh's alarms were superfluous!—The first of these wafered envelopes contained a lithographic address from a ready-money tailor,—setting forth peculiar inducements of thrift in the purchase of livery-coats and velveteens;—the second was a satin-paper circular from a fashionable library, professing to circulate all the new works on the day of publication, or in other words, to supply three hundred copies of every idle novel to its three hundred grateful subscribers;—the third contained a card from Messrs. Stubble and Bubble, hosiers, drapers, silk-mercens, and haberdashers, thanking her ladyship for the liberality of her past favours, (which she had very unwittingly bestowed,) and soliciting her further attention to their new stock, on their new premises, 16, William-street, Clerkenwell;—a locale with which she was very unlikely to become acquainted, unless in her accidental participation of some of Lady Olivia's obliquitous travels through the metropolis.

Frederica flung aside these mockeries of her distress, debased in spirit by the perturbation they had so innocently originated.—But that perturbation, and the reflection to which it gave birth, sufficed to destroy her rest. Her pillow had at length acquired the disquieting uneasiness inseparable from a troubled spirit: she felt that a crisis was at hand. She felt that she must either endure the prolonged mortification of pecuniary involvement, with all its attendant irritations, or the still sharper pang of degrading herself in the eyes of those she loved,—of those who loved *her*,—by an acknowledgment of her weakness, and an appeal to their tender affection. “Oh! that horrible pin money!” murmured she, in

the feverish restlessness of her nocturnal reflections. "Had I found it necessary to have recourse to Rawleigh for the detailed payment of my debts,—had full and entire confidence been established between us in the defrayment of my personal expenses,—never, never should I have plunged into the excesses which embitter a destiny especially blest by Providence!" So absorbed was her spirit in these considerations, that she could find no interval to aggravate her distress by grieving over the unfriendly machinations of Lady Sophia in Miss Elbany's behalf.

Meanwhile Lord Launceston had not only turned a deaf ear to his sister's representation of her disinclination to appear at the Waddlestone House breakfast, but had appealed to her in the strongest terms against any selfish indulgence in her own on such an occasion. More intimately acquainted than herself with the calumnies which had been circulated, and the misrepresentations accredited, relative to her recent adventure, he was aware of the peremptory necessity that she should at once confront the world,—the lying, slandering, malignant world of fashionable life,—supported by the countenance of her husband and brother, and sanctioned by the companionship of her female friends. He had very little indulgence for the sweet sensibilities of the female heart, or the debilities of the female frame;—for aromatic vinegar or salts,—hysterics or fainting-fits;—his sympathy in these interesting crises had long been blunted by the valetudinarian hypochondriacism of Charles-street. He had seen his mother survive the daily deaths of five-and-twenty years!

It was therefore settled that she should fulfil her engagement, and make her appearance at Kensington Gore with as much of her usual cheerfulness and beauty as could be artificially assumed. Launceston had already presented her with a beautiful dress, procured for the occasion through the united agency of Tadcoaster, Bermingham, and Co., from the boudoir of Madame Céliane, and the studio of Madame Minette; and having determined to accompany his sister, Sir Brooke, and Lady Sophia on so interesting an occasion, he made his appearance at the toilet of the former, professedly to insure her punctuality,—but in point of fact to maintain her failing courage. He seemed in the highest spirits;—complimented her on the delicacy of her complexion, and himself on the elegance of her costume;—uttered a thousand extravagant commendations of Mrs. Pasley's dexterity, a thousand ridiculous anticipations of Mrs. Waddlestone's *embarras de richesses* in finding her house full of duchesses,—and laughed and talked with exuberant gaiety. But a more penetrating eye or less pre-occupied mind than that of Lady Rawleigh, might have discerned a

sort of unnatural flurry in all this animation.—There was a lurking anxiety lest he should be deficient in his part,—a hollow echo in his laugh which betrayed its factitious nature.—It was evident that he laboured to assume that boundless hilarity with which a brother might be supposed to escort a beloved sister into the splendid home of his plighted bride; without remembering that nature would have suggested in such a position nothing more than the listless tranquillity of a heart at ease.

Alas! how rarely amid the scenes of polished life are the surface and substance truly identified;—how seldom does the word on the lip, or the expression glancing in the eye, accord with the mighty feeling labouring within!—A diamond melts in the crucible,—but the exhalations emanating from its decomposition are not a degree more noble than those which arise from an ordinary conflagration;—the heart consumes away in secret corrosion,—but flippant wit and hollow laughter grace its martyrdom. Lord Launceston, in spite of his buoyant mirth, was enduring the bitter consciousness of the stigma on his sister's reputation; and the no less painful knowledge of his own hypocrisy in appearing publicly at Waddlestone House as the privileged lover of Leonora, while his thoughts and feelings, his hopes and fears, were exclusively centered in his devotion to the obscure Lucy Elbany.

Never were four persons less joyously inclined than those who progressed along the Knightsbridge-road on this occasion. Frederica's spirit was heavy with the oppression of her debts, Sir Brooke's with that of her indiscretions; Lord Launceston felt that he was about to practise an unworthy deception, and Lady Sophia was intent on analyzing and detecting the real and relative sentiments of her companions. *Her* task of observation, indeed, was somewhat less painful than their's of self-reproach;—but if it did not render her sad, at least it made her grave. Not the slightest sympathy with this lugubrious quartette appeared, however, in the aspect of Waddlestone House. All that opulence and purity of taste could effect was visible in its arrangement; and neither heart-burnings nor discontent interrupted the harmony of its inhabitants.

It may be observed as a general axiom in the science of festification, that even in a sumptuous mansion, supported by the best establishment, the loftiest fortune, and the most illustrious connexions,—a great crowd is incompatible with perfect refinement. An entertainment of the grandiose order of hospitality cannot be perpetrated without numbers; for a magnificent suite of rooms, interspersed with scattered groups, however radiant in themselves, assumes a character of dulness and desolation. Even the fastidious Calder had

judged it necessary to assemble the mob of fashion, in order to give effect to his Faëry masque; but in unclosing for this single occasion the adamantine gates of his enchanted hall, he had found it impossible to baffle the intrusion of many unwelcome denizens of illustrious life;—the old,—the disagreeable,—the ill-dressed,—and the ill-looking.

But a *fête au jour* demands a very different style of arrangement;—a daylight crowd is absolutely repugnant to the eye!—The flushed cheek, and crushed dress, the moistened brow, and angry glance kindled by the consciousness of such distemperance, assume a most offensive reality when viewed through the uncompromising medium of summer sunshine; and however rural the character of the entertainment,—however beautiful the groves and parterres,—however elastic the velvet turf,—however glassy the waters and gay the galleys,—however shadowed the groves, and serpentine the shrubberies,—destined to allure and disperse the lovely visitants according to the suggestions of their hamadryadal or naiadal predilections,—the hungry hour of refreshment infallibly reunites them into one gregarious mass; when the marquee or banqueting-room is fated to display “the many-headed (and many-mouthed) monster-thing” in more than ordinary hideosity.

It was an experienced observation of these circumstances which induced Mr. W. to limit his number of guests to a single hundred;—twenty of them being distinguished foreigners invited by the Princesse de Guéménée—twenty filtered from the elect of fashion by the Duchess of Whitehaven,—twenty more from the more formal class of the high nobility (or, as Lord Calder was pleased to call them, the ancient Druids) by Lady Wroxworth;—while the remaining forty were chosen by Leonora and her mother from her youngest, fairest, and most elegant friends,—and by the host from the sacred choir of literary men and artists of the higher order, whose consecrated mark of caste raises them to the aristocratic level. In venturing on so exclusive a limitation, Mr. W. was more justifiable than almost any other person of a similar station. He had attained his supremacy of opulence without incurring obligations to a single individual besides his wife;—who, for his consolation, was the solitary scion of a scanty race. Even their remote connexions of a less pleasing kind had been broken off by a prolonged residence on the continent; and finding on his return that society

Was all before him where to choose,

he had wisely selected his own circle among persons whose habits of life produce the polished surface of high-breeding,

unruffled by the struggles and vexations of petty care;—whose early mental culture and deficiency of peremptory occupation peculiarly qualify their minds for the enjoyment of literature and the fine arts;—and who—whether from chivalrous inheritance or from the consciousness of standing in high places exposed to ken and comment,—are eminently distinguished by honourable dealings and candid and gentlemanly sentiments. Let it not be supposed that we are servilely borrowing from Mrs. Waddlestone of Waddlestone House, her arguments in favour of lords *versus* commons. But Mr. W. is a favourite;—we are anxious to redeem the smallest of his actions from condemnation;—and moreover sincerely share his sentiment, that in the eyes of God all men are equal,—the labourer with his spade,—the prince with his sceptre,—but that in the eyes of man, eminence of station and eminence of intellect must ever form distinguishing endowments;—that moral virtues are of pretty even distribution throughout all classes of society;—but that the more pleasing qualifications of artificial life,—like the most exquisite flowers,—are forced into bloom by the factitious atmosphere of aristocratic cultivation.

The Rawleighs and Lady Sophia, aware of Mr. Waddlestone's refusal to join the party at Calder House, had not even contemplated the possibility of meeting Lady Rochester and her party at Kensington Gore; but the first person pointed out by Lord Launceston to his sister on entering the saloon was Lord Calder,—wearing his most attractive demeanour, and engaged in most earnest conversation with Sir Thomas Lawrence and a man of similar eminence in the literary world.

"Strange!" whispered Frederica to her companion. "I should have imagined him far too proud to accept the hospitalities of a person who declines his own!"—

"You are a little dunce!—Such is the very motive of his appearance here. Calder's pride prompts him to the condescension of visiting Mr. Waddlestone;—Mr. Waddlestone's pride—in a different shape,—suggested his refusal of the reluctant courtesies of the premier Baron of England. We are all blockheads of the same drove under various disguises."

"Ha! Launceston!"—cried the Duke of Draxfield, accosting them. "After all your ill-nature, you see I have made good my entrance."

"What bribe did you offer the Princess for your ticket?—a *cornet* of Verdun comfits,—or that which her *gourmandise* loves still better,—the first edition of a new scandal?"—His lordship paused suddenly;—struck by the painful recollection that the mysterious money transaction between Lord Calder, his sister, and her footman, had been the last on-dit of the fashionable world; and by the disagreeable apprehension that

his own conduct might possibly furnish the next theme for club oratory.—But the Duke was neither a very discerning nor a very argumentative observer.

"I effected my grandes entrées," said he, "through the family foible of my aunt Wroxworth. She assured me indeed that Waddlestone had passed an especial bill of exclusion against dandies;—but I addressed her a billet-doux, sealed with a family escutcheon, large enough for the Lord Chancellor's signet, which roused all her dormant wivern-and-gules sympathies."

"And I see by your unvaleted lovelocks that you have laid aside the dandy for the day!—No Gowland,—no Kalydor,—no Eau de Ninon,—no Eau d'Heliotrope,—nothing but unsophisticated spring and lavender-water allowed at the toilet!"

"This fellow has done very wisely in unsealing his sanctuary," said the Duke without noticing his friend's sarcasms. "I conclude, Launceston, you persuaded him to admit us for once behind the scenes, that we might see you had not sold yourself too great a bargain. *Fbi de Chevalier!* I never saw anything more exquisite than this house with all that it contains and all that it inherits. My old grandmother Dunriven, who conceives the arts to be attained only through the Herald's College, would expire of indignation, or attain Mr. Waddlestone of high treason, were she to behold the agate chalices and Cellini goblets in yonder cabinet; and as to the pictures—Order declares there is not a Villa in Rome which could display such a string of gems."

"Probably," said Frederica carelessly, "because they have been expressly selected from those ruined temples."

"But do let us a little into the secret, Launceston!" persisted the Duke of Draxfield. "By what magical clue did you originally find your way to this labyrinth of wonders, and unveil your goddess?—By Jove, if it were not for your mother-in-law,—the monster who guards the golden fruit,—I would gladly exchange Draxfield Court and all my old-fashioned lumber, living and dead,—ay! even the Duchess of Dunriven and Zinganee's two colts,—for your soap-boilery!"

"If you say another word on the subject," said Lord Launceston, his natural levity breaking through his temporary depression, "I will buy up all your mortgages, and eject you from Draxfield without merey; and if you dare to affront my *belle-mère*, take my word for it, Master Shallow, I will never pay you the thousand pounds I owe you."

"As Midas sings, 'I would not take your bond, Sir.' But sec, we have the room to ourselves; every one has disappeared through the conservatory. Pray let us for once follow

the multitude; for there is a beautiful little theatre opening towards the lawn, and I espied Mori, Spagnoletti, Wilman, and Dragonetti, in the orchestra, who told me that Pasta, Malibran, and Donzelli are engaged."

"An opera?" inquired Frederica. "I hope it is something new. In July we are apt to grow tired of Mozart and Rossini."

"An opera! nothing so common-place, believe me. In the first place, the *élite* of the Italian, French, and English companies are to give alternate historical tableaux,—the Kembles have undertaken Henry VIII.;—Charles V. at the court of Francis will follow—Madame Albert taking the part of the Duchesse de Valentinois;—and lastly, we are to have *Œdipus* represented by the queenly Giuditta!—Lawrence, who was present at the rehearsal, declares it is the best thing of the kind that has ever been attempted in this country."

"And intended, I have little doubt, as a satire on that treble-refined blunder at Calder House," said Lord Launceston.

"Amateur performances are always bad," said the duke, leading the way through the conservatory; "and yet they amuse one. There is a certain degree of sympathy and private sentiment mingled with their deficiencies. But what a pity that the Dynleys and Erskynes should not be here to profit by the contrast! Your father-in-law, Launceston! prohibited little Erskyne—probably as being a dangerous companion for his daughter;—and Dynley, I suspect, as being what we all find him—an impertinent jackanapes."

"Nevertheless I wish he were here!" said Frederica, who cherished a particular dislike to Lady Barbara's husband, as the malignant author of half the tales circulated in town, and as the peculiar instigator of her husband's jealous fancies. "I should like to see his frightful face jaundiced o'er by the dread cast of envy. A sort of bilious venom seems to circulate in Mr. Dynley's veins instead of the genial current of the soul."

They were now within the folding doors of a beautiful little theatre of Palladian architecture; its space of audience being enveloped in dim twilight,—while a strong light was thrown upon the stage from skylights above, at the will and judgment of the performers. The effect thus produced on the grouping of the tableaux was far superior to that of any artificial illumination; and Lady Rawleigh, on seating herself near the entrance, was too much struck by the admirable personification of Harlow's picture of Wolsey and Katharine, by the Kemble family, which was just then in the act of representation, to utter a syllable in expression of her surprise.—It was not till the gradual descent of the curtain closed the

scene, that a general murmur of admiration rose from the audience!—

Amid the plaudits of the spectators, and the rhapsodies breathed into her ears by the Duke of Draxfield, Frederica cast her eyes round the theatre, and detected through its misty shades all the most distinguished members of the great world, and all in raptures. Had their entertainment been provided in royal halls, instead of those of a notorious scapboiler, they could not have been more unreservedly gratified.—But the spectacle most surprising to Frederica of any visible after the fall of the olive velvet curtain, was that of Lord Calder quietly seated between her husband and Lady Sophia Lee, who had left the saloon together some minutes before Launceston and herself;—engaged in tranquil and friendly conversation, and apparently without any solicitude concerning herself or her movements. Calder, whose glass was occasionally bent round the theatre, at length descried her, and bowed with his usual courtesy; but immediately resumed his discourse with Rawleigh, and interrupted it only when his criticisms were claimed by Lord Wroxworth, who was seated before him. In the pauses which subsequently occurred between the tableaux, filled up by some exquisite symphonies which would have suspended the breath of an audience at the Philharmonic, but which having heard elsewhere were received with a buzz of general conversation, the gentlemen of the party changed their places;—wandered from bench to bench—from group to group—that they might bestow on a succession of their fair friends the thrice echoed echoes of their superlative applause on all they had been seeing and hearing; but Lord Calder remained a fixed star, engrossed by the charms of Sir Brooke Rawleigh's conversation, and enjoying with a plausible air of edification the rational dialogue of Lady Sophia. In his endurance of the heaviest solidity of prose kneaded together by the honourable member for Martwich, he neither "shifted his trumpet, nor only took snuff;"—but encountered common-place with common-place;—answered the most jejune observations by comments equally trite;—and calmly descended to the level of a sluggish monotony of mind. Yet so well accustomed was his lordship to the social art of simulation, that few persons would have conceived him to be otherwise than honestly absorbed by the interesting eloquence of his companions.

Lord Launceston, however, no sooner turned his eyes towards the scene, than he detected its histrionic nature.—But he was now warmly disposed in Lord Calder's favour; and instead of conjecturing that his efforts were directed towards the propitiation of Lady Rawleigh's husband and

friend, in order to prolong and secure his access to her society, he candidly gave credit to his new friend for a solicitude to remove in the eyes of the world all stigma from the reputation of an innocent woman, by exhibiting himself in contradiction to every malicious report, as the familiar associate of her legitimate guardian. Lord Launceston secretly thanked him for his amiable motives, and judicious proceedings; and was charmed to observe that during the hour devoted to a succession of tableaux,—some embodying a well-known picture,—others in the German fashion, representing episodes of some romantic ballad, recited in the foreground by a professional minstrel,—the prudent Calder never deserted his post. The Prince de Guéménée, Lord Putney, Colonel Rhyse, Lord George, and several other men distinguished in the ranks of fashion, crowded to Frederica's side, and vied in their homage to attract her attention;—but Lord Calder approached not!

The tableaux were concluded by Rubens's magnificent "Marriage ceremony of Henri IV.," represented by the whole corps dramatique; and immediately afterwards the guests, wearied by the over-excitement of so novel a scene,—which while it enchanted their senses by its varied perfection, excited, like the Faëry masque, no jealousies of private rivalry,—gradually dispersed themselves among the shrubberies and berceaux. It was in every sense the Feast of Roses!—for nature revelled in her sunniest hour of vernal maturity, till the gardens were literally showered with blossoms; and yet the deep shade of the trellices and groves, and espaliers of blooming orange-trees, secured them from all excess of sunshine.

Lady Rochester was so deeply engrossed in the eagerness of her new conquest,—a Hungarian prince fresh from the wilds of Transylvania, with a countenance of Turkish ferocity enhanced by a revenue and feofs of imperial magnificence,—that Mr. Vaux, her habitual cavalier, found himself at leisure to devote his assiduities to the noble proprietor of Calder House, Calder Park, Calder Chase, and Calder Castle; a patron whom—even in the utmost indolence of his egotism—he never allowed himself to neglect; and tendering the link of his obsequious arm, they wandered together into a plantation of larches, whose med'cinable gums sent forth volumes of spicy fragrance into the sickly atmosphere of the Garden of Roses.

"All this is admirable!" cried Lord Calder, stopping short as they approached a copy of Bernini's *Atalanta*, placed in beautiful relief, among the darkest recesses of the grove. "It almost puts me out of conceit with the arts to find them not only fostered, but fostered with feeling and judgment by—

*a soap-boiler!* After all—the schoolmaster has brought society to its level, and the distinctions of birth are losing something of their charm. I shall get my young goose of the capitol, Lord George, to satirize Calder Castle after the fashion of Pope and Timon's villa; and predict that

Another age shall see its ivied towers  
Mocked by some Bond-street hatter's statued bowers;  
While plaster porticoes around it stand,  
And Nash and Repton lord it o'er the land."

"Bravo—bravissimo!" exclaimed Vaux. "Whatever else the democracy may appropriate, they leave the Damascus blade of satire for the armouries of true chivalry:—you and Byron are the only fellows for an epigram."

"And yet, in this instance, ridicule is not the faithful test of truth. So far from being able to determine

What wants this knave  
That a lord should have,

I can positively suggest nothing more luxurious for my own dainty fastidiousness than the existence he has created. On my soul, Vaux, were I like yourself a marrying man"—

"I, a marrying man? You wrong me."

"I would have forestalled that hand-over-head blockhead, young Launceston, and appropriated to myself and my heirs these groves and their Dryad.—'Tis the prettiest little creature,—fair and silken as the blossom of some delicate exotic!"

"But you forget that I have no gilt bauble with four balls to tender on a crimson cushion in exchange for all her treasures!"

"You have tact and knowledge of the world, which might match any day against the bull-headed candour of a boy like Launceston. Twenty years hence, he may perhaps become worth speaking to; but at present admire his folly in allowing his good-looking friend Rhyse to act as Strephon to his sylvan divinity!—I saw them just now whispering together in the marble temple among the tulip-trees, while he is mounting guard like some conjugal squire over my fair Frederica!"

"And yonder goes your fair Frederica, lending a gracious ear to the flatteries of mine host of the cauldron. I wonder you trust a personage so attractive in her vicinity."

"Partly to gratify little Erskyne's malicious jealousy, who, I am sorry to say, is exceedingly disposed to become her ladyship's rival in my adoration, and partly to further my own projects, I have adopted it as a duty to send her to

Coventry for a whole week. Besides, though I condescended to be jealous of a Lord Vardington, I have no apprehension from a *père de famille* like our Birmingham friend."

"Rochester is a *père de famille*!"

"But not of the 'moral middle-order!'—Never was I more amazed than by finding in my Hampton incognito, the husband of that woman who annihilated all the fine ladies at the drawing-room;—I should have imagined the masculine moiety of the awful Androgynes to be a pig-headed pig-tailed old fellow like my Yorkshire steward. Aha! a gong!—let the *chef* be as good as the stage-manager, and the summons need not be repeated."

## CHAPTER XVI.

Let us try whether these fatal dissensions may not yet be reconciled; or if that be impracticable, let us guard at least against the worst effects of division, and endeavour to persuade these furious partizans, if they will not consent to draw together, to be separately useful to that cause to which they all pretend to be attached.

TUNUS.

LADY RAWLEIGH's *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Waddlestone, notwithstanding her partiality for his society, and her admiration of the gentleness of his address and enlightened refinement of his mind, had been far from dangerously agreeable. While standing with her brother and the Prince de Guéménée in contemplation of a fountain, formed by a basket of interlaced *jets d'eau*, apparently supported on the celebrated Ibis pedestal from Adrian's villa, she had been approached by her host with a courteous expression of envy of a far more beautiful fountain—a certain water-lily,—with which he had been enchanted at his statuary's the previous day.

"It was on the point of being packed for Rawleighford Park," observed Mr. W. "Had the treasure been destined for any other spot, I should have been tempted to offer a bribe of a hundred guineas in addition to that I saw inscribed on the accompanying bill, in order to make it my own without delay."

This reference to, or rather this aggravation of, her financial difficulties, sufficed to gather a cloud on Lady Rawleigh's brow;—but whence arose that which now overspread the countenance of her brother?—Was it that Mr. Waddlestone's presence oppressed him with a consciousness of his own unworthy position in the family?—Was it that he feared the scrutinizing eye of a parent might penetrate the treacherous secret lurking in his bosom?—His air and speech became flurried when he attempted to enter into conversation with his future father-in-law; and he immediately endeavoured to introduce a topic, such as might afford a plea for escape.—"Mrs. Waddlestone—he had not yet seen Mrs. Waddlestone. Was she in the gallery?—the saloon?—the Claude breakfast room?—was there any chance of finding her, if Lady Rawleigh and himself should go in search of her?"

Mr. Waddlestone, evidently surprised by his embarrassment, but with paternal partiality attributing his young friend's discomposure to the unwelcome necessity of bestowing those attentions on his sister which he was eager to offer

to his beloved Leonora, replied with a smile, "My wife is scarcely obliged to you for the tardiness of your inquiries; you ought to have known two hours ago that she is confined to the sofa in her Turkish tent-room by a sprained ankle. Nay! do not look so disturbed!—She will be good enough to give you credit for a proper sympathy on so grave an occasion; and, as I know her to be perfectly contented in our kind friend Lady Wroxworth's company, who devotes herself to her for the morning, I will pardon you, if instead of flying to make your inquiries, you find your way to Leonora. She is engaged with Prince Albert and Colonel Rhyse in the music-room. Lady Rawleigh will perhaps honour me by accepting my escort during your absence."

Half the hint would have been sufficient for Lord Launceston. Delighted to escape on any terms, he resigned his sister to Mr. Waddlestone's arm, and hurried away, the prince leisurely following.

"You must forgive me," resumed Mr. W., as soon as they were out of sight, "for venturing to offer my unworthy self as Lord Launceston's representative; but I am not yet so old as to have forgotten the tediousness of a day passed within sight of those we love without the power of communication. My poor girl has been looking so harassed and unhappy all the morning, that I could not but take pity on her."

"Miss Waddlestone is very good—*too* good—in affixing so much importance to my brother's absence or presence," said Frederica, sincerely indignant at Launceston's disingenuous proceedings; "for her own are very eagerly marked, and warmly prized by many persons equally deserving her attention."

"Pardon me," said Mr. W., unable to understand this seemingly unhandsome allusion on the part of one whom he had been taught to believe as affectionate a sister as she was amiable and ingratiating in herself; "I cannot allow you to include Lord Launceston in so generalizing a clause. Among all the young men of the day,—whether distinguished by their rank, fortune, fashion, or accomplishments,—I know of none worthy to compare with him in noble candour of disposition—in honourable purity of character."

Lady Rawleigh blushed deeply as she listened to this ill-timed eulogy; and secretly determined to insist, on occasion of her first private interview with her brother, that Mr. Waddlestone and his daughter should be no longer duped by his false pretences.

"Perhaps you may consider me premature," continued her companion, "in referring to an engagement which I trust will, at no distant time, privilege me to address you with more intimate confidence. But you must forgive a father

wrapped up in the welfare and happiness of an only daughter"—(his voice grew husky as he spoke)—"for saying that were Lord Launceston's indiscretions and pecuniary involvements twice as heavy, twice as notorious, as I find them to be—they would be amply compensated by the worthiness of his own disposition, and by the excellence of the mother and sister he will bestow upon my girl. His equals—his *superiors* in rank, Lady Rawleigh, have sought her at my hands; and even among those least qualified to appreciate her merits, Leonora's beauty and dowry have secured, and might still secure, many an illustrious aspirant to her hand; but there is not one—not one—besides himself, to whom I could intrust without anxiety the fosterhood of a temper so gentle, the guardianship of a spirit so spotless!"

Mr. Waddlestone was too much affected to notice the consternation of poor Frederica; who heard in these outpourings of parental tenderness renewed accusations against her thoughtless brother. Very sincerely did she wish that Miss Elbany had never been tempted to quit the "pleasant little village of Wansfield" in search of a genteel independence; but although she did not venture to utter a syllable, Mr. W. fancied he could read in her silence an amiable sympathy with his feelings.

"I have no longer any apprehension," said he, "that the attachment will prove on either side a mere momentary predilection. It is now nearly a year since Horace Rhyse first brought his friend to dine at our Marino; and, with the exception of a few winter months passed by your brother at Rawleighford, and by Leonora at Brighton, they have scarcely been separated a day. Even then, the daily visits of Colonel Rhyse, who was in close correspondence with his friend Launceston, sufficed to turn poor Leonora's cheek to crimson whenever he was announced. In fact, I am now so satisfied of the steadiness and strength of their mutual affection, that I have come to a determination—"

"My dear Mr. Waddlestone!—my dearest Fred.!" wheezed a panting voice behind,—*"take pity on my exhausted lungs. I have been puffing after you all down the allée verte; but you were so deeply engaged that I could not attract your attention. Oh! my dear Frederica!"* continued Lady Olivia Tadcaster, coming up with them, and unceremoniously seizing the gentleman's disengaged arm; "*such a vexatious morning as I have had!—everything contrary,—everything perplexing!*—You know, my dear, I told you I had promised to lend my carriage and horses to the Peewits, to go first to the oculist's, and afterwards to Calder House, when they were to send it back for me while they were viewing the gallery; and having brought me here, it was

to take them to dinner in Charles-street :—then return to fetch me ;—then call to bring them home. Nothing could have been better arranged !”

“ Severe duty for your horses,” said Mr. Waddlestone, conscious that some comment was expected by this erudite professor of the art of ingeniously tormenting.

“ Oh !—they are only jobs !—no one has any scruple about working job horses. Well, my dear Fred., I was full dressed by two o’clock,—(you know I hate to be behindhand)—and from half-past, I began to be on the look out for the carriage ;—but all in vain !—First I had the mortification to see Lord Calder’s four bays go sweeping by with Lady Rochester ; and the Duchess of Whitehaven passed my door before half-past three, evidently on her way to Kensington Gore,—but no signs of my poor unfortunate chariot !—I was quite in despair ; I knew the *tableaux* were to begin at four,—and I have not been gratified by seeing anything of the kind since I was staying, eight years ago, at Nymphenburg, with my old friend the present Queen Dowager of Bavaria. I really could not make up my mind to submit patiently to the deprivation ; so I sent a little civil note to Lady Twadell, begging the favour of her equipage, (I called it *equipage* to gratify her silly vulgar pride) to convey me to the fête. But the poor soul has been so mortified by finding herself excluded, that she had the assurance to write me word her coachman was dying of a quinzey ; although she is well aware that I meet her every day in both the parks, and on all the roads round London, with postilions !—I have no notion of such airs !—I consider Lady Twadell a very ungrateful little woman ;—it is astonishing what pains it cost me to get her into a little good society, when I was trying to secure her jointure for my nephew.”

“ And how did you manage to get here at last ?” said Lady Rawleigh, trembling lest her aunt’s shabby manœuvres should be still further unveiled to Mr. Waddlestone.

“ My dear, I sent to half-a-dozen people ;—but every one of them was off !—The reputation of our good friend’s excellent table had induced all the latest of the late to set out full an hour earlier than is usual on such occasions. And then, not exactly knowing the *carte du pays*, I made two or three such unlucky blunders !—I wrote to Lady Barbara Dynley for a seat in her phaeton ; and she, taking it for a premeditated affront,—(for it seems every one knows that she was refused a card) !—sent me a verbal answer that she was not going to Waddlestone House, being engaged to dine at Mother Red Cap’s with the Chandler’s Company ;—then I had a very ungracious answer from Lady Margaret Fieldham about her mother’s barouche ;—and when I stepped over to

inquire whether your little friend, Mrs. William Erskyne, could accommodate me, she had the impertinence to reply that *she* never—but I really beg your pardon, Mr. Waddlestone," said Lady Olivia, suddenly checking herself as she became conscious of his presence,—“I beg your pardon for repeating these insolent flippancies: the annoyance of having lost your *tableaux* makes me forget everything.”

“And the Miss Peewits?” inquired Frederica, to fill up this awkward pause in the conversation. “Had any accident occurred, or were they only negligent?”

“My dear Frederica, I was in a perfect state of agony!—I sent John to Mr. Alexander’s,—they had been there to consult him and were gone;—I despatched a second servant to Calder House,—neither they nor the carriage had ever made their appearance!—I could no longer entertain a doubt that they must have been detained by some very serious mischance;—perhaps the horses had run away,—perhaps the carriage had broke down,—for it has never been to the coachmaker’s since I returned from Carlsbad; or perhaps Clara Peewit had fallen into a fit!—for, between ourselves, she has already had two attacks, as much resembling palsy as anything you ever heard of, and is as likely to go off at a moment’s warning as any one I know. I was really beside myself; for I now gave up the collation for lost, and was actually beginning to fear I should be obliged to put up with a family dinner with my sister Launceston,—one of her insipid sweetbread-and-spring-chicken set outs, instead of my friend’s luxurious fare,—when luckily I spied Camomile’s carriage stopping at old Lord Cygnet’s!—So away I sent my own maid with my compliments and half-a-crown to the coachman, and ‘Lady Launceston’s sister would be glad to be driven as far as Grosvenor-place, while he was waiting for his master.’ I thought, perhaps, I might manage to pick up, or be picked up by somebody on my way; but as ill-luck would have it, I was obliged to bring the poor man as far as this very door. However, as the coachman well knows, my sister is one of Camomile’s best patients,—a hundred and fifty pounds per annum without attendance,—and no end to presents in venison, fruit, and coral necklaces, to the little Camomiles! So I really had no scruple in compelling the poor man to *walk* home for once in a way, for it was too late you know for him to visit any other patients. Besides, Lord Cygnet’s is one of what I call Camomile’s sessions-houses; for he is not only obliged to relieve his lordship’s asthmatic hypochondriacism by fetching and carrying all the tittle-tattle of the day for his edification; but to give up an extra half-hour afterwards to the audience of his patient’s tiresome twaddle!”

**TWADDLE!**—Lady Olivia Tadcaster utter a syllable in disparagement of twaddle, after inflicting this extensive dose upon two inoffensive individuals, while some twenty of the London colloquial birds of Paradise were fluttering in sight, with their heavenly gamut at the free disposal of their host and his lovely friend!—Yet let it not be imagined that her sudden pause was occasioned either by want of matter or want of breath, or by Mr. Waddlestone's impatient interference. At the sound of the appetizing gong, anxiety transferred the wings from her tongue to her feet. Eagerly did she urge her companions to hasten, lest the soups should lose their genial perfection of caloric;—and with the delights of a *potage à la Soubis* before her eyes, lips, and olfactory presentiments,—her ladyship fled like the wicked, though no man pursued.

Discomposed in the first instance by the peculiar nature of Mr. Waddlestone's confidential manifesto, and in the sequel by Lady Olivia's provoking self-exposure, Frederica followed languidly the guidance of her kind and frank-hearted companion. She ventured a few words, indeed, in extenuation of her aunt's apparent selfishness, but Mr. Waddlestone stopped her in a moment.

"Do not apologize to *me*," said he, "for the absurdities of Lady Olivia Tadcaster. She is an old and tried friend of mine, and has long ranked in my mind among those persons who do themselves less than justice; who are capable of praiseworthy and generous actions, while their conversation announces them as mere egotists."

But this good-natured interpretation did not remove the weight from Lady Rawleigh's spirits; and when she found herself seated in the almost regal banqueting-room at the left hand of her host, who was compelled to place the Duchess of Whitehaven to his right,—and beheld at the end of a glittering vista of gilt-plate, her brother occupying the post of honour, and dividing his homage between Mrs. Waddlestone and her daughter, she felt heartily ashamed of his position and her own;—she conceived that they were sharing the guilt of a scandalous and perfidious imposition on a respectable family. Half-way between the two sat Lord Calder, still attached to Lady Sophia and Sir Brooke; and not all the delicacies successively placed before them, not all the more than epicurean daintiness of the feast, and the brilliant flow of conversation by which it was enhanced, could for a moment efface from Lady Rawleigh's mind the remembrance of her recent, and present, and approaching penance.

Nor did the diversions which succeeded the pleasures of the table afford a more effective charm.—Vain were the concert,—the improvisation,—the charade; and joyfully seizing

the pretext of Lady Sophia Lee's avowed engagement to return to town and pass the evening with a friend, Lady Rawleigh's carriage was announced among the earliest departures.—On their way to May Fair, Lady Sophia was fluent in expressions of amazement at the elegance and magnificence displayed in all the arrangements of the day, and more particularly in praise of Leonora and her loveliness; a theme on which Lady Olivia—who had manœuvred herself into the fourth seat in the carriage left vacant by Launceston's delay—fully seconded her eloquence; while poor Rawleigh could talk of nothing but the ingratiating manners of Lord Calder.

"I always fancied him a fine gentleman,—I have heard so many people complain that he was *high*;—and positively I never met with a more simple, unpretending, manly fellow!"

On arriving in Piccadilly the deluded baronet begged he might be set down, in order to find his way to his club; while Lady R.,—after depositing her two companions and learning at the door in Charles-street, whither Lady Olivia desired to be driven, that the Miss Peewits were safely anchored in its harbour to the utter interruption of her projected explanation with her mother,—proceeded—*home*!

"SWEET HOME!"—sang Miss M. Tree in the sweetest days of her nightingalism;—"Sweet home!" echoes the falsetto of many a mocking-bird of private life.—"Sweet home!" whistles the school-boy:—"Sweet home!" murmurs the exile.—Alas!—alas!—

*No pledge is sacred, and no home is sweet*

to those who endure the stings of indigence and the pangs of conscience.—(This should have been *vice versa*—but *n'importe*!)

It was just ten o'clock when Frederica entered her cheerless drawing-room,—cheerless from being prematurely closed for the evening, and filled with fading flowers and a general disarray which accused the abstraction of its mistress's mind; and having desired Martin to extinguish the candles, she fled from its dreariness to her own room, resolved to take shelter from herself in a long night's rest. But no sooner did she reach her dressing-table than, true as Mephistopheles to her victim, Mrs. Pasley appeared with a very peculiar expression of impertinence irradiating her large pepper-and-salt coloured eyes.

"I am not well—or am over-fatigued;—I think I shall go to bed," said Lady Rawleigh, unclasping one of her bracelets and throwing it on the table.

"Indeed, my lady, I must say you appear extremely indis-

posed," observed the lady's-maid; "quite *frappé en haut*, as my Lord Launceston's Swiss valet expresses it. Perhaps your ladyship is not well enough to look at these letters?"

And she produced on a salver a horrible-looking fac-simile of the missive of Messieurs Stubble and Bubble; which, although emanating from a more humanized district than Clerkenwell, emulated all its partnership dignity of address. But instead of adding to their thanks for past favours a solicitation for new ones, the Bond-street haberdashers subjoined to the expression of their gratitude a "small account, which being the close of the season, or Midsummer half-year they conceived it might be agreeable to her ladyship to look over and settle previously to leaving town." Her ladyship, as the first process of this agreeable duty, cast her eyes from the long sinuous curly-tailed £., marshalling the first column of the enemy, to the awful base; "units,—tens," but no!—we have no inclination to unveil the secrets of the sex!—Suffice it that in defiance of Pasley's scrutinizing presence, Frederica sank breathless into her chair!

"Another note, my lady!—Mrs. William Erskyne's own maid brought it this evening, and was extremely anxious to wait for an answer till your ladyship came home; but the house-keeper would not hear of it.—Really, ma'am, Mrs. Erskyne is so very oddly spoken of, that we are by no means anxious to entangle ourselves with the acquaintance of any of her establishment." And Frederica, on receiving the billet into her trembling hands, found a ready explanation of her lady-in-waiting's familiar impertinence, on observing that it had been purposely left unsealed that its insulting contents might be exposed to the curiosity of her domestics. Involuntarily she covered her cold forehead with her hands, and faltered her commands to Mrs. Pasley that a hackney-coach should be immediately procured.

"A—a—hackney-coach!—for—for your ladyship—at—at this time of night?" cried the lady's maid, apprehending some dreadful issue.

"Desire John to call a coach, and put on your bonnet to accompany me;" said Lady Rawleigh, attempting to resume her air of authority.

"La! my lady!—*Me*,—my lady?—Why it is near eleven o'clock! The servants in the hall will think it so very extraordinary!"

"I desire I may hear nothing further of their thoughts or your's; but get ready to accompany me to Curzon-street."

Mrs. Pasley flounced out of the room, in reluctant obedience to commands uttered with a degree of asperity so unusual to the lips of her gentle mistress; and somewhat disappointed that no catastrophe more awful than an evening visit to Lady

Sophia Lee was about to tax her powers of professional secrecy.

Not a syllable was exchanged between the two while the vehicle, whose unsavoury and uneasy properties did not so much as excite the notice of Lady Rawleigh, jolted towards its destination; but on approaching the mansion of General Lee, her ladyship requested that the knock might disturb the inmates, and that John's mysterious ring at the bell might be accompanied by a request in her name to see Lady Sophia alone. Having been respectfully ushered by the gray-headed butler to a boudoir, separated by a sort of museum-corridor from the drawing-room, Frederica was not long kept in suspense.

"What is the matter?—You look pale,—agitated:—sit down, my dearest Lady Rawleigh, and compose yourself!" said her friend, affectionately embracing her after having carefully closed the door.

"Forgive me for disturbing you," said the culprit in a low voice; "but I am come to ask your advice."

"Rawleigh has been tormenting you!" ejaculated Lady Sophia, who had no especial predilection for her Warwickshire kinsman.

"No,—I have only been tormenting myself."

"You have heard, then, of these foolish reports about little Erskyne; but in what way do they involve you?—*You* did not introduce her to Lord Calder, nor are you responsible for her bad education and want of principle."

"I am wholly ignorant to what you allude:—but my grievances are all personal,—my follies all my own."

"My dear Frederica!"—

"I am overwhelmed with debts, difficulties, and disgrace; and I want your counsel whether to throw myself on Rawleigh's forgiveness, as my heart inclines me,—or expose my weakness only to mamma and Launceston."

"You must tell me something more than this vague self-accusation, before I can decide."

"Most unfortunately," resumed Lady Rawleigh, with a sigh of mingled heaviness and contrition, "a very liberal settlement of pin money was made on me at my marriage. I was brought up in total ignorance of the comparative value of money; had never been admitted to the slightest discussion of pecuniary affairs; and this unlucky four hundred a-year appeared to my inexperience to comprehend all the riches of the earth. More than half this infinite treasure, however, was appropriated to the disgraceful écarté business with which you are already acquainted; while the remainder has been trifled away by my own idle improvidence, and in some degree through the undue influence of others.—But no

matter!—I am now so deeply involved, that nothing less than four or five hundred pounds can restore me to my peace of mind. Tell me, dear Lady Sophia,—dare I sufficiently rely on Rawleigh's indulgence to acknowledge the whole truth, and claim his pardon and assistance?"

"How much did you say?" inquired Lady Sophia, musingly; while Lady Rawleigh construing her calmness into an expression of amazement and disgust, stammered forth,

"About five hundred pounds!"

"Are you sure that sum would cover the whole?" inquired her friend; while Frederica, anticipating the degradation of an offered loan, eagerly exclaimed, "You do not surely suppose that I would accept such an obligation from any but my own family!—I trust—I hope—you believe me incapable of having calculated on your assistance. I thought you had a better opinion of me."

To Lady Rawleigh's surprise and indignation—for her own heart was full—her companion's reply to this heroic appeal was a violent burst of laughter; which was only renewed and repeated, when she rose with great dignity, and prepared to take her departure. She could not endure the spectacle of her friend's unsympathizing mirth. But Lady Sophia, instead of apologizing for her rudeness, seized her visitor forcibly by the hand, and drew her towards the drawing-room.

"No—no! I cannot see General Lee to-night—I am too weary—too miserable!" exclaimed the struggling Frederica.

"General Lee is dining at Twickenham!" replied Lady Sophia, still approaching the drawing-room. "But I have a friend here who will feel very little hesitation in accommodating you with such a trifle as five hundred pounds!" And throwing open the drawing-room door with an exclamation of—"Here! my dear!—I have brought you a penitent spend-thrift!"—her indignant guest suddenly found herself in the presence of the despised Miss Elbany!—

"My dear Frederica!" cried the presumptuous companion, advancing with the most offensive familiarity to take her hand.

"This is too much!" exclaimed Lady Rawleigh, turning indignantly aside; while Lady Sophia threw herself into a chair with a renewal of her provoking merriment, and Miss Elbany encircled the recoiling waist of her victim with a tender embrace.

"My dearest Frederica! have you not a single kind word to say to your cousin Mary?" whispered the rejected damsel.

"Mary Trevelyan?" faltered Lady Rawleigh with sudden consciousness.

"Mary Trevelyan!—to whom you have demeaned your-

self so harshly, while you were solely occupied with her eulogy and defence!—My dear, dear Fred!—shall I ever forget the zeal with which you fought my battles against Broughley and Mrs. Woodington and all my tribe of enemies,—while *I* sat by, an unsuspected spectator of the affray.”

Lady Rawleigh actually trembled with delight!—She saw through it all!—Sir Brooke was innocent—was an accomplice of the stratagem,—she alone had been unreasonable, unjust, jealous, absurd; but she received and returned the affectionate embrace of her beautiful cousin,—and all was forgotten!

“Dismiss your hackney-coach, and come and chat comfortably with us over our tea,” said Lady Sophia, removing her bonnet and drawing her towards the sofa. “You can send back a message to Rawleigh by the servants, to come and fetch you on his return from the Alfred.”—

And in a few minutes the three fair friends were gossiping away with as much cheerful and confidential unanimity, as if their friendly union had never known interruption; and as if they were not preordained to

Meet again  
In thunder, lightning, and

all the painful perplexity of a domestic storm.

## CHAPTER XVII.

But what is your affair in Elsinour?

HAMLET.

"Do you remember, my dear Frederica," inquired Lady Mary Trevelyan, after some twenty reminiscences of a similar nature, "how I affronted you by purposely criticising your court-dress, in order to send you to the drawing-room with the brilliant bloom of suppressed indignation?"

"And do you recollect, my dear cousin," cried Lady Rawleigh in her turn, "how mortified I was on learning that my mother intended her new companion's portrait to be the *pendant* of mine and Launceston's!"

"And poor dear Sir Brooke!—whom I used to comfort in all his domestic tribulations, at the peril of being stilettoed by his jealous little wife."

"It was hardly fair of you," cried Frederica, blushing, "to steal this march on us, and pry into the nakedness of the land. Heaven knows what secrets you might have detected, —or what family plots unravelled!"

"You gave me strange encouragement to proceed in mine, by all the handsome encomiums you bestowed on the merits of your absent cousin."

"Merits which I had not the grace to discern in Miss Elbany."

"My dear Fred.! all your disapprobation was most appropriately bestowed. You saw me in a false position. Had I been in fact as well as seeming, the hired companion of my aunt Launceston, I should have been the worst and most presumptuous of my species. But I see you are dying to interrogate me touching the motives of my 'excellent dissembling;' and I am fully prepared to gratify you, provided you first appease my curiosity by explaining the cause of your present visit!"

"Do you then venture to doubt my word?" said Lady Sophia Lee, holding up her hand in a menacing attitude. "'Tis even as I told you!—The poor child has spent all its money; and you cannot do better than secure it from the whipping it deserves, by presenting it the thousand pound cheque with which Lord Trevelyan has commissioned you to procure 'the cadeau for his dear niece and god-daughter Frederica, which

he neglected to send on 'the occasion of her marriage.' My life on it, she will prefer the payment of her debts, to all the pearl necklaces and sapphire Sévignes in Kitching's shop!"

"Here is my father's letter, with its enclosure," said Lady Mary, taking a paper from her portfolio, and tendering it to Lady Rawleigh. "Read it at your leisure, my dear cousin, that you may assure yourself I have neither exceeded my commission nor imposed on your delicacy!—And now for my own manifesto; the most painful article of which is spared me in the confession, inasmuch as my treacherous friend Sophia acknowledges having already informed you of my indefensible fidelity to my cousin William, and my determination to ally myself with no other human being."

"As well as of Lord Trevelyan's anxiety to shake your resolution."

"I may as well still further spare your blushes, my dear Mary, and acquaint your cousin that after being wooed by half the resident princes of Italy and wandering peers of England,—and after driving some into the Po, and some into the Tiber by your obduracy,—you so far ceded to your father's intreaties as to promise that if, on visiting England and forming an acquaintance under a feigned name and assumed character with your recreant knight, you found him inferior in merit to your preconceived prejudice in his favour, you would return and accept the hand of whichever among your adorers he might be pleased to select for your husband."

"I had very little apprehension of incurring so dreadful an alternative," said Lady Mary Trevelyan, her fine countenance brightened by emotion; "and having secured my father's concurrence in this wild-goose scheme, I easily obtained my kind aunt Launceston's promise of assistance. In fact she was pining for the loss of her daughter, and was delighted with the prospect of a visit from the child of a beloved brother."

"Mary had not however the wisdom to confide her plans and projects to me!" cried Lady Sophia, "or I should have certainly opposed such a dereliction from the dignity of the sex."

"Or to intrust her cousin with the secret," observed Frederica, reproachfully, "or I might have avoided a thousand discourtesies and a world of painful jealousies."

"Your mother would not hear of admitting you into the conspiracy. 'My Frederica,' she said, 'is of so candid a disposition, so unused to dissembling, so warm a partisan in her cousin Mary's cause, and above all so tenderly attached to her brother's interests, that we must not calculate upon her prudence on a similar occasion.'"

"But surely you ran great chance of recognition from many

of the visitors in Charles-street, who must have seen you in Italy?"

"One or two, I suspect, were puzzled,—and terminated the difficulty by setting me down as a poor relation, or a natural daughter of the Trevelyan family;—but my father has associated very little with the English residents on the continent. It was my inquisitive aunt Olivia who formed my chief embarrassment. She had not however seen me for many years, and I own it afforded me no little amusement in my assumed character to baffle her manœuvres."

"And excite the jealousies of your poor cousin," said Lady R., smiling. "You have made sad victims of us all!"

"While I was solely intent on *one*;—and I flatter myself not without success. William fell into the snare with far more facility than my utmost vanity could have anticipated. From the first evening of our meeting he was at my feet! Before a fortnight had elapsed he even urged me to unite my fate with his by a clandestine marriage; and had it not been for Lady Launceston's qualifying representations of his fickleness on other occasions, perhaps I might have been tempted to render his probation *too* short by throwing aside the mask at once!—It was the perplexity of not knowing how to get rid of his importunities without a premature discovery, which induced me during your visit at Ash Bank to take Sir Brooke Rawleigh into our counsels."

"How astonished he must have been;—how ashamed of his wife,—how angry with Launceston!"

"He *was* angry with Launceston; and in my opinion far more so than the case required. But Rawleigh candidly acknowledged he had some reason to suppose his brother-in-law entangled with another engagement; and promised to make the necessary investigation while I retired from the scene of action."

"And where did you go on that mysterious occasion?" inquired Frederica, recollecting her brother's pilgrim's progress through all the parishes of Sussex. "To Rawleighford, I hope."

"I ought to have told you that my father escorted me to England, and has been living in strict privacy at Trevelyan Castle to wait the result of my chimerical plot. From thence on Lady Sophia's arrival, I wrote to beg her hospitality."

"Which, with an abundance of scolding for your folly, I condescended to bestow. She has been with me these three weeks, Frederica; and on Sir Brooke's favourable report concerning the Waddlestone affair,—for he persists in believing that no such engagement exists,—I ventured to indulge Mary's idle curiosity and gratify her vanity by a sight of her rival at the fête at Calder House."

"Do you remember our awkward rencontre in the vestibule?" said Lady Mary. "My consternation was *au comble*, for the Guéménées are very old friends of mine, and I expected every moment to be recognized and addressed by them as 'Ledi Marie Triviglian,' and by Mr. Broughley as Miss Elbany. What *you* might be pleased to call me, Frederica, I dared not even anticipate;—for believe me you looked much fiercer on the occasion than Una's lion!"

"I own I was very angry,—but more with Sophia than yourself; for alas! I was better apprized than either of the serious nature of my brother's engagements in another quarter."

"No—no!" cried Lady Mary, blushing deeply. "Even had I been previously doubtful of the strength of Launceston's attachment, the easy familiarity of his demeanour towards the queen of the fairies on that occasion would have convinced me that I had nothing to fear from Titania. So far from appearing embarrassed by her presence and mine, he urged me to allow him to present Miss Waddlestone, who had long been desirous of making my acquaintance."

"What audacity!—what scandalous hypocrisy!" exclaimed Frederica with indignation.—"Nothing can justify William's double-dealing in this affair!"

Lady Mary Trevelyan, although evidently disturbed by the vehemence of her cousin, was too proud to request an explanation of these animadversions; but Lady Sophia's interest in the happiness of her friend forbade a mere point of delicacy to interfere with her clearer insight into the subject. "My dear Frederica," said she, "we know you to be at once the true friend of your brother, and Mary's earnest partizan;—even the violence of your prejudice against Miss Elbany tended to prove the eagerness with which you were disposed to promote the union of Lord Launceston and Lady Mary Trevelyan.—Tell us therefore candidly,—do you differ from Rawleigh in your estimate of his attachments and entanglements;—have you any reason to suppose him seriously engaged to Leonora Waddlestone, and disposed to trifle with the affections of a person in Miss Elbany's apparent situation in life?"

"Not all your arguments—not all your assertions," interrupted Lady Mary with spirit, "will induce me to think so ill of him as such conduct would demand. That Launceston loves me with fervour and sincerity, is too deeply imprinted in my mind—in my heart—to be easily obliterated. Expert indeed must be the hypocrite who could affect all I have heard and seen him profess to feel. I am no novice in the flatteries and *feigning* of mankind. The same vows have been sworn to me by other lips—the same devotion affected

by other men ;—my fortune has insured me suitors of various countries, and various degrees of hypocrisy ;—but, none have ever deceived me into credulity."

"Surely, however," said Lady Sophia, "it may be possible that your partiality for your cousin"—

"If there be faith in any human heart, it is in Launceston's !" cried her friend, with all the eager confidence of affection.

"She will not listen to reason from the lips of any one but his sister," said Lady Sophia, addressing Frederica. "It is therefore incumbent on you to forewarn this infatuated cousin of yours, should you chance to be better instructed in his views. In one word, my dear Frederica, is Lord Launceston free in heart and hand to tender himself to Mary's acceptance?"

Lady Rawleigh shook her head.

"My dearest cousin, explain yourself," said Lady Mary Trevelyan. "Without promising to yield implicit conviction to your *inferences*, I am really anxious to acquaint myself with every *fact* within your knowledge."

"Do not ask it—do not ask it," faltered Frederica. "Launceston is too dear to me, his honour is too precious in my sight, to be lightly compromised. I cannot bear to believe him so unworthy as I fear he has proved himself."

"But the whole affair must necessarily be brought to an immediate explanation," observed Lady Sophia Lee. "Lord Trevelyan is growing impatient,—his health suffers by his sojourn in the damp atmosphere of Cornwall; and having been deceived by his sister's sanguine letters into a belief of Lord Launceston's passion for his daughter, he is about to visit London. After forcing his nephew to confess his attachment to the obscure Miss Elbany, it will be no small triumph to tender to his acceptance the object of his rash passion,—in the form of Lady Mary Trevelyan, with a fortune of ten thousand a-year!"

"What—what will my uncle think and say of William, when he learns the truth!—Oh! my dear Mary!—for all our sakes persuade him at least to defer this fatal *éclaircissement*!"

"You really alarm me!" cried Lady Mary, turning very pale. "And as you perceive that a crisis is inevitable, surely you will not scruple to apprise me of the truth. Are you certain that Launceston has been at any time *really* engaged to Miss Waddlestone?"

"Alas! it is but a few hours since I was informed of the fact by her father; and with so much emotion of parental tenderness, that I can no longer withhold my belief."

Lady Mary Trevelyan shuddered, but said nothing.

"And this is not the worst!—Were it a mere engagement, formed as the world believes from sordid motives on one side, and ambitious views on the other, I could wish—I could hope—that it might be mutually resigned. But I can no longer indulge in expectations of such a nature. Leonora's affections are too deeply pledged for Mr. Waddlestone to behold them betrayed without signal retribution; his whole heart is as much set as his daughter's on her union with my brother."

"Do you assure me, dear Frederica," said Lady Mary, scarcely able to articulate, "that Leonora is really attached to him?"

Lady Rawleigh was significantly silent.

"Poor girl!" involuntary ejaculated Lady Sophia. "To *her* delicate feelings the shock of disappointment will be indeed severe!"

"Frederica! you have not answered me?" said Lady Mary with solemn earnestness.—"Does Mr. Waddlestone's daughter really love your brother?"

"It was not till that unfortunate fête at Calder House," hesitated Lady Rawleigh, "that I had an opportunity of learning from her own lips how deeply her heart is pledged to Launceston. It was my intention to put her on her guard by some slight hint of his levity and infidelity, till the candour of her allusion to her attachment completely disarmed me. I had no courage to agonize the feelings of so gentle and confiding a being."

"It is enough!" murmured Lady Mary Trevelyan, rising from her seat. "Suffer me to leave you;—I can meet this mortification best alone. Sophy!—do not follow me!—Your consolations, however kindly meant, are unavailing to soften this last—this wholly unexpected misfortune!"

"Have I done wrong in declaring the truth?" said Lady Rawleigh timidly, as soon as her cousin had closed the door of the apartment.

"No!—decidedly not," answered her friend, after a moment's consideration. "The worst part of this calamity has originated in deception,—mutual deception; and depend on it dissimulation is ever productive of equally disastrous results. Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is the only guide insuring eventual safety; and Ithuriel's spear, although an obsolete, is a safe weapon to fight our way through the world."

"Launceston's deceptions could not have been prolonged, or I own I should have hesitated to inflict so much pain upon poor Mary."

"Do not alarm yourself!—she has a romantic but a truly courageous spirit. I know no person more capable of gene-

rous sacrifices and honourable disinterestedness than Mary Trevelyan."

"And such is the sister I have lost!—such the companion!" cried Frederica, despondingly. Leonora is a mild, intelligent, endearing creature; but no more to be compared in qualities and endowments with my high-minded cousin, than in dignity of birth and station!"

"It was so ill-done on my part to depend on Rawleigh's judgment in such a case!" cried Lady Sophia, peevishly. "But, in truth, I was guided by your mother's opinion, who has managed the affair throughout with perfect prudence and delicacy. For all the best faculties of a woman's mind and heart borne with the unassuming weakness of a saint, commend me to Lady Launceston!—Were it not for the infirmity of her health, she would be the most charming companion, as she is at present the most excellent woman in England."

"That is Sir Brooke's knock!" cried Frederica, suddenly starting up, and tying on her bonnet.

"I am glad it is so late, for I should have had no patience to sit in his company without reproaching him with the mischief he has occasioned. At all events, do not involve him further in the affair by acquainting him with Mary's wretchedness; I will see you early to-morrow, and inform you of her future views and resolutions."

It is unnecessary to acquaint the reader with what degree of exactness Lady Rawleigh obeyed the injunctions of her friend. Few are the women whose heroic constancy to the claims of their own sex induce them to withhold its secrets from the conjugal ear; and if Frederica really abstained from introducing Sir Brooke behind the scenes of Cousin Mary's confidence, and reproaching him with the evils arising from his own blindness and credulity in the affair, she deserves considerable praise for her forbearance both as a wife and a friend. But lest she should pass for a miracle of caution, it is but fair to state that her mind was considerably engrossed by the altered position of her own affairs,—by rejoicings over her immediate extrication,—mingled with penitence for past follies, and good resolutions for the future. Her first duty was to indite a formal note to Mrs. William Erskyne, to accompany on the morrow the fatal remittance for the Operabox; and although her misgivings and terrors respecting the tenor of Mr. Obadiah Rugg's answer to her request no longer disturbed her repose, she was seated at her desk in her dressing-room the following morning at nearly the same hour which had closed her night of sorrow on the occasion of Lord Calder's fête.

But times were strangely altered with Frederica. The sparrows chirped, and she had not a word to say against their

importunate garrulity;—the water-carts rumbled, and they were nothing more obnoxious to her feelings than the rolling wheels of some triumphal chariot;—the milk-pails jingled, and she was patient—the post knock startled the dull ear of morn, and she cared not for the peal!

“Can it be possible!” she exclaimed, as this last circumstance forced itself on her notice, “that all my vexation, and discontent, and peevishness, and nervous distemperature for the last three weeks, has originated in the want—*the waste*—of money!—Have I, in the wantonness of thoughtless extravagance, contracted so mean a feeling as pecuniary anxiety?—Never—never again will I expose myself to such temptations and such wretchedness;—and when perfect confidence in money transactions is established between myself and Rawleigh—when by referring to him for the immediate payment of my bills, I expose myself to reprehension for any prodigal or frivolous action, I shall be insured from all danger of further extravagance. I love him too well—much too well—to hazard the loss of his good opinion for the indulgence of my idle fancies.”

Such was the result of her matin meditations;—while the fruits of her early rising were made apparent as she approached the breakfast table with a list of her debts in one hand, and in the other the cheque forwarded to her acceptance by Lord Trevelyan.

Does any one wish to see the list of a lady's debts?—does any curious impertinent of the male sex desire to pry into the mysteries of female extravagance?—If so, he may be admitted into the secret on condition that the opinions he ventures to express on such an occasion, are as lenient as those which proceeded from the lips of the honourable member for Martwich.

				£	s.	d.
Opera-box	-	-	-	150	0	0
Fountain	-	-	-	94	10	0
Horse	-	-	-	80	0	0
Miniature	-	-	-	31	10	0
Hampton	-	-	-	15	15	0
Haberdasher	-	-	-	79	13	6½
Mantuumaker	-	-	-	112	10	6
Jeweller	-	-	-	43	7	0
Pasley's account	-	-	-	33	4	0
One year's pocket-money	-	-	-	75	0	0
Ecarté	-	-	-	280	0	0
				994	9	0½!!!

Against these items were inscribed a per contra of—

		£	s.	d.
Received of Mamma	-	100	0	0
Lady Olivia	-	50	0	0
Pin money	-	300	0	0
		<hr/>		
		450	0	0

leaving an unpaid balance of - 544 9 10½

"And now that you have perused and reperused this record of my frailties and follies," whispered Frederica, as she hung over her husband's chair, "deign to accept the sum presented to me by my uncle,—give me only the balance necessary for the payment of my debts,—and for the future let the odious word of PIN MONEY be forgotten between us!"

Sir Brooke smiled, and shook his head, but not reproachfully.

"I know you will be as conscientious and liberal a banker," continued Frederica, while tears of tenderness and repentance streamed from her eyes, "as you are a merciful judge; and for the future I shall have no scruple in demanding from your hand the payment of my personal bills, for they shall never be of a nature to excite your disapprobation."

"But as this affair of the Pin Money was legally specified or—"

"No—no—no!" interrupted Lady Rawleigh. "Nothing has been, or ever shall be, legally specified between us!—I have proved myself incapable of the management of my revenue, and am therefore bound to appoint a chancellor of the exchequer. Should I ever become as worldly-wise as my aunt Olivia, be assured I will redemand my abdicated rights."

"God forbid that you should ever be otherwise than I see you now!" ejaculated Sir Brooke, as he folded her in his arms;—and in the expansion of his feelings forgot to point out an error of calculation in the pounds of her *compte rendu*. "I accept your pledge,—I welcome your promises,—I have perfect faith in the good intentions of my own dear wife. Should she at any future time repent her confidence in my liberality, she has only to address her formal demand to Obadiah Ruggs; in the meantime," said Sir Brooke, putting Lord Trevelyan's cheque into his pocket, with a determination that it should be scrupulously devoted to its original purpose; "in the meantime let me write you a draught for the balance of your account. If you love me, send it to Lombard-street immediately after breakfast, and discharge your obligations to that mischievous Mrs. Erskyne without further delay. Hence—

forth, dearest Frederica, be all past grievances forgotten between us!"—

"*Between* us if you will:—but it will be a salutary lesson to me, to cherish for life the recollection of all I have suffered through my ignorance and neglect of the value of money."

Before Sir Brooke had reached the final "*gh*" in the signature of his cheque, Lord Launceston was announced.

"Leave us together," whispered Frederica to her husband, as he entered the room.—"My brother looks as if he had something important to communicate."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

But whatsoe'er he had of love, reposed  
 On that beloved daughter!—She had been  
 The only thing which kept his heart unclosed  
 Amid the hardening of the worldly scene;  
 A lonely pure affection unopposed!  
 There wanted but the loss of this to wean  
 His feelings from all milk of human kindness.

BYRON.

THERE is nothing more absurdly diverting to an indifferent spectator, than the sight of two persons connected by intimate ties of kindred and affection, casually alienated into a sort of awkward estrangement and formality by the existence of some disagreeable secret;—when a common topic predominates in the minds of both, and neither can venture to approach the prohibited subject.

Lord Launceston's embarrassment sought the usual channel for the splenetic effusions of a discontented Englishman. He began to complain of the weather; protested that the fête at Kensington Gore had been spoiled by a redundancy of sunshine,—the evening rendered disagreeable by an insalubrious dew;—and now stood at the window looking up anxiously towards the clouds on an excuse of coming rain, but in reality to evade his sister's inquisition. While Frederica, who was at once eager to escape his inquiries, and anxious to forward her own, affected an unusual degree of interest in the news of the morning,—the reports concerning Mrs. Erskyne, and a strange rumour she had heard respecting a marriage between Mr. Vaux and Lady Margaret Fieldham.

To these idle *on dits* Lord Launceston lent a willing but a listless ear. His mind was full,—his heart was full;—and, like all persons of real sensibility who attempt an unusual degree of caution and finesse in introducing a disagreeable subject of discussion,—he brought forth the business at last in the most abrupt and inartificial manner. Suddenly interrupting himself in a diatribe against Vaux as the most plausible and worldly-minded of the crawlers on the globe, he exclaimed, "My dear Frederica,—unless you undertake an explanation of this business to Mr. Waddlestone, I know not what will become of us all."

"Impossible!" cried Lady Rawleigh; "for worlds I

would not encounter the expression of that poor girl's wretchedness!"

"Of *you*," continued Lord Launceston, without noticing her reply, "*he* has the very highest opinion. From *your* lips he would listen patiently to an apology which, if delivered by myself or Horace, would certainly produce an insult and a duel in the first instance, and a decided rupture between the lovers in the second!"

"I should have imagined that, with your present views and feelings, you would desire nothing better than such an excuse for getting rid at once of poor Leonora."

"To be sure not!—Nothing but my old friendship for Rhyse has compelled me to wear the mask so long; but now that old Offaley *has* consented, I think it rather hard,—but it is no use talking to *you* on the subject. *Your* prejudices, my dear Frederica, must necessarily render any circumstances distasteful to you which would immediately determine me to claim the hand of my poor dear Lucy."

"Have you resolved, *en attendant*, to drive me to distraction by all these mysteries?" exclaimed his sister. "What in the world have Lord Offaley and his son to do with your marriage?"

"How!" cried Lord Launceston, coming from his window, and throwing himself on a seat beside her. "Is it possible that you are still deceived?—Leonora assured me that on the night of the Calder House fête she attempted to explain to you the unlucky deception in which we have foolishly involved ourselves."

"Attempted—but really Miss Waddlestone's explanations are as little luminous as your own. If you love me, my dear William, admit a little further light into the business."

"I *do* love you, my little Fred.!—and not the less for the warm interest you bestow on my affairs. In one word, then, or in as few as possible, know that last summer I received a letter from Horace Rhyse, imploring me to come down to Cowes without delay, and rescue him from a most painful predicament. I thought the poor fellow was in limbo; and in the simplicity of my heart gathered together all the pounds, shillings, and pence, I could call my own, with a view to relieve the difficulties of my oldest Harrow friend; who through life has done me more good turns in a quiet way than I would have accepted from any other man, or can ever pay him back. The prison in which I found him was neither more nor less than Waddlestone's beautiful Marino!. He had picked up the family at Rome, and fallen as desperately in love with Leonora, as if there were any chance of prevailing on his stiffnecked father to receive into his family a soapboiler's

daughter ; or of inducing Mrs. Waddlestone to content herself with being mother to an Honourable Mrs. Rhyse."

" Ah ! my dear Launceston—I see it all now ; I sincerely beg your pardon for—"

" No ! you don't see it half,—and you had better not beg my pardon at present. Believe me, I deserve all the saucy things you have said and done in the business, by madly conniving in one of the most absurd schemes that ever was concocted by two wrong-headed lovers ! But in fact Colonel Rhyse was induced to seek my aid, by the unpleasant circumstances arising from Mrs. W.'s suspicions of his attachment to her daughter. After inviting him to her house, and throwing them together in the most unjustifiable or stupid manner, she suddenly informed him of her positive determination 'to marry Leo to a lord,' adding some slight hints that there were other bathing places, and other Marinos, where he might enjoy the sea air fully as well as on the banks of the Medina."

" And you came to his assistance,—and by lending him the shelter of your coronet, secured the continuance of her favour ?"

" Exactly so !—she was so charmed with 'my lordship' that she would gladly have extended her hospitality to my lordship's valet and poodle, to say nothing of my bosom friend. Under my sanction Rhyse was duly re-admitted to the yacht and the dinner-table ; while Leonora thanked me with her soft blue eyes for this insurance of their mutual happiness."

" They were perhaps already engaged !"

" Heart and soul and hand !—and if we had been wise,—if there had existed one tolerable head-piece among the three,—she would have appealed at once to the affection of her parents, and ended the business without further artifice. But Horace had a difficult part to play in his own family. Lord Offaley being as poor as a parish workhouse, thinks it necessary to maintain his dignity by uniting in his own person all the pride of the peerage ; and as he was then in the habit of favouring his son with a letter every post, commanding him to throw himself at the feet of Lady Margaret Fieldham, it seemed useless to answer them by a statement of his attachment to the daughter of a soapboiler ; so, like all dunces, we decided amongst us that it would be better to gain time,—procrastinate the explanation,—and pacify Mrs. Waddlestone—by my assuming the capacity of a suitor to Leonora."

" Oh ! Launceston !—how could you lend yourself to such a deception ?"

" Ay ! indeed—how could I ?—It was a most shameful

piece of duplicity,—shameful because I profited largely by the imposition;—being cordially received into one of the pleasantest and most hospitable houses in England, while I was deceiving the partiality of the best of fathers !”

“Poor Mr. Waddlestone !”

“Don’t talk of him, Frederica, don’t talk of him—I dare not even look forward to the moment of meeting him again ! I really love that man;—I consider him one of the most high-minded and honourable fellows upon earth ; and flatter myself that at present he regards *me* with a personal predilection.—The certainty of forfeiting his good opinion is most painful to my feelings.”

“But the explanation is now inevitable,” said Frederica, musingly.

“As to his daughter,” continued Lord Launceston, pursuing his train of thought—“had she been Lady Leonora or Queen Leonora, she never would have been more to me than a pretty gentle little girl,—I have no taste for such diminutive goddesses;—I require, even in a woman, even in my wife, more decision of character, and more nobility of aspect.”

Such as you found in Lucy Elbany ?” observed Frederica slyly.

“But with respect to Waddlestone, were he that same Lucy Elbany’s poor curatizing uncle, I should still regard him with the same respectful admiration. He is a gentleman in every sense of the word.

“I doubt whether he would be inclined to return that compliment either to Colonel Rhyse or yourself.”

“He would wrong his own judgment if he did ;—our conduct has been unpardonable.”

“Well !—I must make the best of it for you both,” said Lady Rawleigh, rising to ring for the carriage.

“Frederica !—my dearest sister ! do you really mean to say that you will undertake this unpleasant office ?”

“I do indeed,—provided that—”

“No provisos which have any allusion to Lucy !”

“At least allow me to”—

“No—no ! I will allow you to do nothing but go and put on your bonnet. I will order the carriage while you are away.”

The bonnet and the harnessing produced no very important delay ; and it was agreed between Frederica and her brother that she should drop him at Colonel Rhyse’s lodgings in Chapel-street, that they might drive together in his cabriolet along the Knightsbridge road and await any favourable issue ; when just as Launceston was conducting his

sister down stairs, Lady Olivia's voice was heard in the hall.

"Oh! that woman!" groaned his Lordship.

"Oh! my dear Fred.!—my dear nephew!" cried her ladyship.

"Do not allow her to detain us," whispered Lord Launceston to his sister. "Do not in retribution of my sins, suffer that foolish old woman's twaddle to prolong my misery."

It was however her cousin Mary's sufferings, rather than his own, the abridgment of which induced Frederica to turn a deaf ear to Lady Olivia's volubility. "Excuse me,—excuse me, my dear aunt," she cried, hastily touching her hand in her progress through the hall to her carriage, "for I have not a moment to spare."

"But I *must* speak with you, if it is only for half a second; I have something of great importance to communicate."

"In the afternoon,—in the evening,—I will call upon you; but as you may perceive, the carriage is at the door"—

"But I will step into it, and accompany you."

"Impossible!—Launceston is going with me, and we are to call for a friend."

"A friend!" exclaimed Lady Olivia, contemptuously—"when the best interests of your own *family* are at stake!"

"I grieve to be so ungracious," persisted her niece. "But I really *must* leave you;—I have some important business on my hands."

"Business!" again retorted the aunt, doubly agonised at the idea of being excluded from so luxurious an indulgence. "*You* talk of business, Frederica,—*you* attempt to transact business, without my advice and assistance;—*you* who actually omitted to endorse a bank-bill!"

"My dear sister," interposed Lord Launceston, "you forget what precious moments you are wasting. Let me implore you to"—

"As you please!" cried Lady Olivia Tadcaster, growing fiercely indignant, and seating herself on a hall-chair, to recover her breath. "Perhaps, Lord Launceston, you may feel better inclined to honour me with your attention when you learn that my brother Trevelyan is arrived in town; and that you will have to account to him for your past and present conduct."

"For anything that I care, Lord Trevelyan may—"

"Come away!" interrupted Frederica, her anxiety for a termination of the Waddlestone business redoubled by this intelligence, and still more by the dread of Lady Mary's immediate departure;—and seizing her brother by the arm, her

jumped into the carriage, leaving Lady Olivia transfixed in the mahogany hall-chair,—a living parody of the beautiful heroine of *Comus*.

"Vastly well!—it is all vastly well!" she panted forth, as the chariot rolled from the door—"I shall hear that gracious young gentleman change his note before the day is over. He will find that Lord Trevelyan, of Trevelyan Castle, is not a person to be insulted with impunity. What was that, Martin, my nephew said about Lord Trevelyan just before he left the hall?—'for anything he cared'—*what* was it?"

"I really cannot take upon myself to say, my lady!" replied the butler, anxious to close the hall-door on her departure. "But I heard her ladyship observe that she should be at your house in less than an hour, my lady."

"Did she!—are you sure she said less than an hour?" cried Lady Olivia, astonished that anything should have escaped her own ears, which, like those of Fine-Ear in the Fairy Tale, were apt to hear the grass grow. "Then I must be off without delay;—for I have got to call in Charles-street on my way home,—and at the Van office about booking the Miss Peewits' trunks,—and at the furrier's, who takes care of my sable muff and tippet for the summer;—besides leaving my card on Mrs. Camomile, to thank the Doctor for the use of his carriage. In *less* than an hour?—It is now half-past two; I shall never be back in time."

Joyfully did Martin hail her departure!—while Sir Brooke, after cautiously obtruding his head from the study-door to ascertain that she was really gone, stole off in an opposite direction, to bear to Lady Sophia Lee Frederica's pacifying message and entreaties that she would not suffer Lady Mary Trevelyan to quit her protection without a further interview.

In the course of the foregoing narrative we have permitted ourselves to gratify the curiosity of the inquisitive reader and our own taste for diffuse, by such a superabundance of circumstantial detail, that the admirable diplomacy exhibited by Lady Rawleigh at Waddlestone House must be passed over in a very cursory manner. It is well known that women have a peculiar tact for this sort of domestic negotiation. They seize the efficient line of attack with the discrimination of a leading counsel, and detect at once the weak points of the enemy; glide over the smooth passages with a kind of *legato* tenderness, and dash through the difficult bars *fortissimo*.

- a. But it needed all the persuasive gentleness of Frederica's voice,—all the eloquence of her phraseology,—and all the noble emotion of sisterly partiality trembling on her lips,

—to moderate the indignation of Mr. Waddlestone against the imposition practised upon him by Lord Launceston and his friend. There was one point, however, on which Lady Rawleigh rejoiced that her eloquence was not in demand. She felt that she should have been puzzled to find arguments for Leonora's defence;—for the exculpation of a child, who knowing herself to be so tenderly, so exclusively beloved, had enlisted in an ungrateful stratagem to deceive an adoring parent.

"To Lord Launceston and Colonel Rhyse," faltered Mr. W., with a countenance bearing the character of profound emotion, "I can readily concede my pardon;—they are aliens to me and mine,—and have broken a bond of no peculiar sanctity;—have eaten of my bread and drunk of my cup, it is true—but they have not been unto me as a daughter. Oh! Lady Rawleigh!—may you never know the anguish of treachery from such a source;—may you never learn what it is to find your own heart's blood arrayed in rebellion against you,—to feel yourself deceived by one whom from infancy to maturity you have strained in boundless confidence to your bosom!—But I am justly punished for my infatuation;—I have suffered my child to wander through the corrupt and contaminating mazes of the world of fashion,—and sowed the wind to reap the whirlwind!"

But Frederica, satisfied of her own insufficiency to make the worse appear the better cause in order to appease the wrath of a justly-incensed parent, did not forget the existence of a far more eloquent advocate. She determined to leave the business in the hands of NATURE!—and having summoned the terrified Leonora, had the satisfaction of perceiving that a few bitter tears of contrition shed upon the bosom of her father, said more in her favour than all the rounded periods which could have been pressed into her service from the eloquence of Lord Advocate Jeffrey, or Lord Chancellor Brougham. Mr. Waddlestone promised *to try* to forgive,—when it was evident that his pardon was already fully accorded. After all, Colonel Rhyse was a young man of prepossessing manners, and good reputation;—it might have been worse!

With Mrs. W., meanwhile, Frederica found her task infinitely less distressing. There was a kind of ludicrous, Mrs. Peachumlike tone of distress in her lamentations over the degeneracy of her daughter in preferring a paltry Honourable to a real bona fide Lord, which blunted all delicacy of emotion in seeking her concurrence in the match. And having at length persuaded the irate lady to join with her husband in bestowing her blessing and forgiveness on the trembling Titania, Lady Rawleigh privately insinuated her

opinion that Lord Offaley's interest and her own thousands might possibly procure the honours of a peerage for his second son ;—while, as his elder was still a bachelor, and a notorious Meltonian, there remained a tolerably clear vista towards the earldom.

Before Frederica quitted the house, peace was in some measure restored ; and on the whole, the affair was one of less perplexity than she originally anticipated. Mrs. W.'s hysterics had been by no means so vehement as might have been expected from her vulgar egotism ;—and although the mortified father still wore upon his brow the expression of severe anguish,—of the disappointment of a man who finds himself wronged, even “there where he had garnered up his heart,”—he had the mercy to smile upon the penitent Leonora, and the forbearance to claim from Lady Rawleigh the continuance of her friendship for his child.

“This is indeed kind of you !” said Frederica in reply, as he led her to her carriage. “Conscious of the unworthy treatment you have received from us, I was apprehensive that both my brother and myself would be henceforward excluded from your good opinion.”

“Lord Launceston,” said Mr. W. “has conducted himself like a young and thoughtless man ; at *his* age perhaps the persuasions of a bosom friend might have urged me into the same error. I am, however, more grieved for the loss of such a son as I flattered myself of finding in your brother than angry with the success of his plot.”

“Tell me then that I may send him to obtain your pardon ?” said Lady Rawleigh in a low voice, bending from the window of the carriage. “The two offenders, I fancy, are not far distant.”

“Not to-day !—I am not equal to seeing them to-day !” said the agitated father, with a pale mournful smile.

“Yes—yes ! let the worst be over at once,” rejoined Lady R.—And despatching her servant towards the entrance of the court-yard to summon Lord Launceston and Colonel Rhyse, who were waiting in their cabriolet at the gate, she had the satisfaction of seeing the three gentlemen shake hands and enter the house together before she drove back to town.

## CONCLUSION.

On their way from Bruton-street to the house of Colonel Rhyse, Frederica had obtained a promise from her brother that he would meet her at dinner in Charles-street, and take no steps in the interim relative to his uncle's arrival, or to Lucy's enigmatical disappearance. She had even pacified him by a promise to obtain from her mother such intelligence concerning her protégée as might satisfy his doubts on the subject. "But I fairly warn you, my dear William," said Lady Rawleigh "that to my certain knowledge, you have not the least chance of seeing Miss Elbany again!"

None but a lover could have been sufficiently blind to interpret the arch smile with which this declaration was uttered, into the expression of malicious triumph. Nevertheless it weighed so heavily on the heart of Lord Launceston, that he presented himself at his mother's door between seven and eight o'clock, with a brow as moody as if he had not passed an hour at Waddlestone House in perfect charity with its inmates, and in all the joy of beholding his friend Horatio accepted as the future husband of Leonora.

On the stairs he was accosted by his sister, who begged him to retire with her for a moment to the back drawing-room, as she had something interesting to communicate; and irritated by the brilliancy of her dress, and the evident elation of her spirits—so little in accordance with his own feelings—he followed her into a room where, seated in solemn state on the sofa, he was welcomed by a grave elderly personage—whose star and family resemblance announced the dreaded Earl of Trevelyan!

Indignant to be made the dupe of an ambuscade, Launceston immediately assumed an air of defiance and a tone of self-possession very little in unison with his real feelings. He listened indeed to his uncle's remonstrances in respectful silence, and hazarded not a word in apology for his own inexplicit and frivolous conduct towards his cousin, which he had long felt to be wholly indefensible. But when, at the close of his oration, Lord Trevelyan proceeded to state that notwithstanding the levity and inconsideration of his conduct, both Lady Mary and himself were willing to fulfil the contract and make him their own by a formal alliance, Lord Launceston no longer scrupled to reply. In firm but not uncourteous

terms, he positively declined the proffered honour; and by way of a decisive close to the negotiation, frankly acknowledged that he was pledged in heart and hand to another.

"I shall not, however, consider the rejection conclusive," said his delighted uncle, "till you have had an opportunity to admire in your cousin those personal graces which have obtained the applause of half the courts in Europe; and my solicitor will wait upon you to-morrow morning with the project of a settlement which would put you in possession, on your marriage day of a sum of eighty thousand pounds in ready money, as well as of estates to the amount of ten thousand per annum."

Most magnanimously indignant at this hint of bribery and corruption, the young lord of Marston Park and its mortgages assumed a more heroic air. "Were Lady Mary Trevelyan the most faultless, the most lovely of women," said he, "she could never rival in my estimation the humble and obscure individual to whose happiness I have sworn to devote the homage of my future life. With respect to your lordship's munificence, I trust I may be spared all future allusion to so humiliating a subject."

He rose to leave the apartment, and Frederica seized the opportunity to throw open the folding doors into the drawing-room; where he now beheld to his utter dismay, an assemblage of his nearest friends and relatives attired in all the brilliancy of full dress;—his mother and Lady Olivia, Sir Brooke Rawleigh, the General, and Lady Sophia Lee.

"Now for Lady Mary!" thought poor Launceston. And the prospect of being obliged to assume a cold and discourteous demeanour towards a woman, involuntarily imparted the most awkward embarrassment to his air. But it was not his treasured cousin who, on his entrance, rose from Lady Launceston's side, and advanced towards him! It was Lucy herself—his own poor humble Lucy!—nor could he by any means understand the folly which had enfolded her majestic figure in robes of the richest satin, and encircled her beautiful head and graceful arms with a profusion of diamonds. In spite of this superfluous magnificence, however, and in spite of the audience by which she was surrounded, her manner had lost nothing of its usual warmth and frankness.

"My dear William!" she exclaimed, accepting his extended hands, "my dear cousin!—I read in my father's countenance that all is right—that you are not to be dissuaded from your engagements to poor Lucy."

"Well! young Sir!—do you still persist in rejecting my daughter?" said Lord Trevelyan, his eyes glistening with the emotion of gratified paternal love; while Frederica, her husband, and friends, gathered round the group.

Lord Launceston's reply to this inquiry need not be repeated;—it sufficed to give rise to a general family congratulation.

"Mother—mother!" cried he, leading his plighted bride towards Lady Launceston, to meet her maternal embrace, "I did not think you could be such a traitress."

"My dear son!" she replied, affectionately folding her niece in her arms, "believe me we very quiet people are the only depositories for a secret. You have often thought me insensible to your vexations;—but with such children as mine, I could not but feel satisfied that our difficulties must eventually terminate in honour and happiness!"

It was a delightful dinner—a charming evening!—one of those glorious summer holidays which could sanction even Lady Launceston in enjoying the luxury of open windows and a verandah filled with flowers. During Frederica's journey to Kensington Gore that morning, parliament had been prorogued; and Sir Brooke being once more a free man, it was settled that the whole party should immediately adjourn to Ash Bank, for the solemnization of the marriage by which it was to be still more closely united.—Lady Olivia's heartfelt delight at this promised accession of seven visitors to her beautiful villa, almost silenced her accustomed garrulity!

In the course of the evening, however, she managed to find in Sir Brooke Rawleigh and the patient General an audience for two signal pieces of scandal she had picked up in the course of her morning's perambulations. It appeared that Mr. Erskyne having detected his wife in a correspondence of the most equivocal nature with Lord Calder, and indulged in much violence on the occasion,—the thoughtless Louisa had seized the opportunity to quit his house, and throw herself on the protection of a man very ill-prepared, and very little inclined to make any sacrifice in favour of a woman so valueless in his estimation; and that Lady Rochester and her set were already loud in the expression of their indignation at a measure insuring the dissolution of their coterie.

"What a pity," exclaimed General Lee, "that Calder cannot delegate his unfortunate nephew, young Rockingham, to represent him on this occasion by tendering *his* hand to Mrs. Erskyne. Nothing would be more inconvenient to a man attached to society like Calder, than an alliance with a divorcée; and poor Alfred has so long been deputed to execute his uncle's unacceptable duties, that I should not be much surprised to see him bribed into marrying that unfortunate woman at whose feet he has so long been sighing."

"But you *will* be extremely astonished, en attendant," cried Lady Olivia, "to learn that Mr. Broughley is engaged to Lady

Levinia Lisle ; and that they are to pass the honeymoon in a voyage to Alexandria, from whence they proceed on a mission to Timbuctoo, for the discovery of the lost tribes of Israel."

"And what is this history," inquired Sir Brooke of General Lee, "concerning Vaux's proposals to Lady Margaret Fieldham?—They say it is a scandalous take-in."

"Nay!" replied General Lee, "after all it is only the bitter bit. Dynley, Indice, and Morse, and several other club-idlers of Vaux's acquaintance, being as they assert heartily sick of Lady Margaret's airs and grimaces and intrusions on their attention, resolved to get rid of her ladyship by domesticating her in some mediocre alliance. Accordingly they laid a trap for Vaux by whispering in his hearing, as a great secret, that she was about to derive a splendid fortune from the death of her aunt, the Duchess of Trimblestown,—who caught cold at Calder's fête and is now dying!"

"And the blockhead actually proposed on this temptation!—"

"The *rogue* did,—and was accepted!—A charming couple they will make, and a noble ménage will they enjoy!—and thus Lady Rochester loses both her brother and her lover by a single stroke of misfortune."

"My dear Frederica!" whispered Lady Sophia Lee, drawing her friend away from the group, and interrupting her pensive meditations over the errors of Louisa ; "While your brother and Mary are murmuring soft nothings to each other at yonder window, Lady Launceston and Lord Trevelyan are deep in finance ; I heard them plotting together just now concerning the marriage settlements.—Go ! dearest,—go and interpose a word of advice on the important article of PIN MONEY !—"

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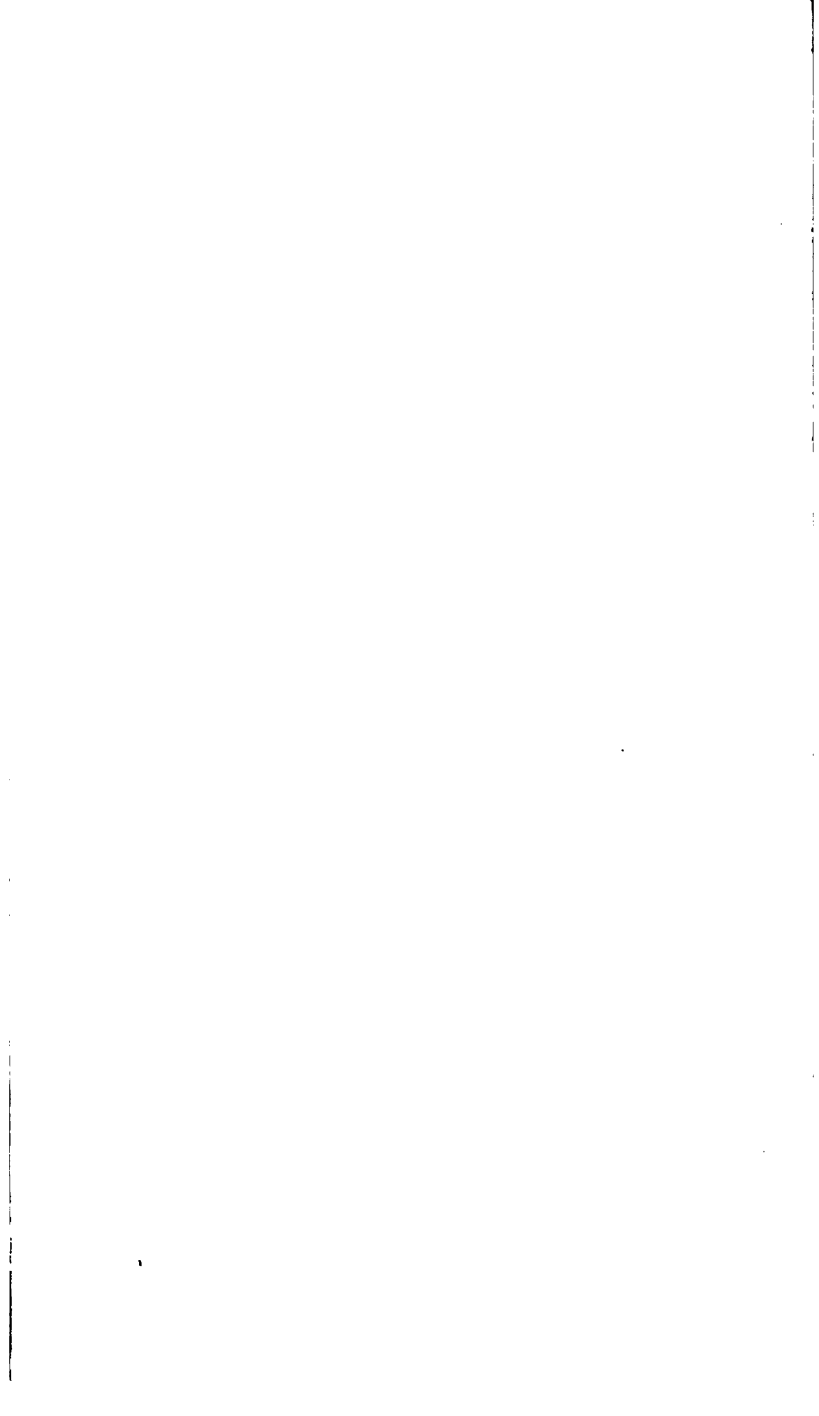
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